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ABSTRACT

Research on school restructuring reveals the commitments and competencies that lead to improved outcomes for children, including careful attention to students' emotional development, professional development that emphasizing the reflective study of teaching, culturally responsive and inclusive teaching, and a focus on early language and literacy instruction. Chapter 1, "Introduction," presents data on school children in Washington and describes the Unity Project's attempts to facilitate strong family-school-community partnerships to improve the performance of historically underachieving students. Chapter 2, "A Caring Community of Learners: Creating a Protective Shield," contrasts schools organized as caring communities to the factory-model school. In a caring community, supportive teachers, mentors, and advocates nurture the emotional and intellectual development of children. The importance of positive expectations and opportunities for meaningful participation is explored in a Whittier (CA) elementary school case study. Chapter 3, "Professional Development Through Collaborative Inquiry," describes what works, and what does not work, in professional development, and examines supportive organizational structures. Chapter 4, "'She Was Just as Smart Being Huy-Yon, But Her Grades Went Up When She Became Shirley," explores the impact of cultural influences one thinking, the important role of reflective self-analysis, development of cultural competence, and the creation of a culturally responsive school environment. Research on English as a second language, the structure of the language-learning environment, styles of discourse, and literacy are applied in a case study of the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe. Chapter 5, "Learning to Read and Write," explores the barriers to literacy in poorer communities and offers several activities, programs, and strategies promoting literacy. Chapter 6, "Family/School/Community Partnerships: An Interest That Comes From the Heart," describes the common aspirations of children, the process of

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building effective partnerships, and school-based child and family support programs that foster resiliency and emotional intelligence. Appendix A provides a detailed assessment of the current situation of Washington's children. Appendix B lists statistical indicators of child welfare for 26 Washington schools, disaggregated by race and ethnicity. Appendix C provides a brief history of major ethnic groups. Appendix D offers a list of contact information for multicultural literature, resources, and authors for children. (Contains 250+ references.) (TEJ)

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# the UNITY PROJECT

## CREATING A CIRCLE OF AWARENESS

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Cover photograph courtesy of student mural at David Wolfle Elementary School in Kingston, Washington.

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# the UNITY PROJECT
## CREATING A CIRCLE OF AWARENESS

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November 30, 2000

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# Table of Contents


Chapter I: **Introduction** ..... **1**
Washington School Children ..... 2
The Unity Project ..... 2
About This Study ..... 5
About This Document ..... 6

Chapter II: **A Caring Community of Learners: Creating a Protective Shield** ... **7**
**Resilient Children: Keepers of the Dream** ..... **8**
Caring and Support ..... 10
Positive Expectations ..... 18
Opportunities for Meaningful Participation ..... 20
Conclusion ..... 23
**Whittier Elementary School: Highlight My Strengths** ..... **24**
Using an Enrichment Model: "What Can We Do Differently?" ..... 26
A Comprehensive Literacy Program ..... 28
Supporting Teachers and Families ..... 29
Conclusion ..... 31

Chapter III: **Professional Development Through Collaborative Inquiry** ..... **33**
**Supporting Professional Development: What Works? What Doesn't?** ... **35**
Supportive Organizational Structures ..... 40
Conclusion ..... 46

Chapter IV: **"She Was Just As Smart Being Huy-Yon, But Her Grades Went Up When She Became Shirley"** ..... **51**
**Theories of Cultural Discontinuity** ..... **51**
Examining Deeply-Held Societal Beliefs ..... 54
Reflective Self-Analysis ..... 57
Becoming Culturally Competent ..... 61
Creating a Culturally Responsive Environment ..... 65
**Learning English as a Second Language** ..... **70**
Research on Bilingual Education ..... 71
Stages of Second Language Learning ..... 73
Structuring the Language-Learning Environment ..... 74
Styles of Discourse and Literacy ..... 76
Conclusion ..... 79

**Building Bridges: The Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe** ..... **80**
Education Summits ..... 80
Advocating for Parents and Children and Their Culture ..... 81
Supporting Children's Education ..... 82
Aspirations for Children ..... 83

Chapter V: **Learning To Read And Write** ..... **85**

**Poverty and Early Language Learning** ..... **87**
Differences in Early-Language-Learning Environments ..... 89
Fourth-Grade Slump ..... 91
Research on Brain Development ..... 94

**Building a Solid Literacy Foundation** ..... **96**
Children Who Learn to Read and Write "Naturally" ..... 97
Storybook Reading by Children Who Are Not Yet Reading ..... 99
A Balanced Curriculum: Avoiding the Instructional Cuisinart ..... 104

**Elements of a Balanced Curriculum** ..... **105**
Print-Rich Environment ..... 105
Literacy-Enhanced Learning Centers ..... 105
Sharing Books with Children ..... 106
Reading Aloud ..... 106
Shared Reading Experience ..... 108
Encouraging Independent Reading ..... 111
Teacher Demonstrations of Skills and Strategies for Decoding ..... 112
Onset, Rime, and Analogy ..... 114
Metacognition and the Effective Use of Strategies ..... 116
Children Identified with Reading Problems ..... 117
Summary of Strategies to Facilitate Decoding ..... 118
Dictating and Acting Out Stories ..... 121
How to Get Started with Dictation ..... 122
Opportunities to Write, With Various Levels of Support ..... 123
Beginnings ..... 124
What to Write ..... 125
Supporting the Writing Effort ..... 126
Using Projects to Integrate Literacy Into All Aspects of the Classroom, Including Visual Art and Music ..... 127
Linking Literature With Art ..... 128
"Poetry Is Like Directions for Your Imagination" ..... 129
The Project Approach and the Inquiry Model ..... 130

Monitoring Children's Progress ..... 132
Writing Assessment ..... 132
Retellings ..... 133
Running Records of Oral Text Reading ..... 133
Individualizing Instruction ..... 133
Conclusion ..... 134

**Tulalip Elementary ..... 135**
The Tulalip-Based Classroom: Meeting Washington State Benchmarks through Tulalip Language and Culture ..... 135
Relationships with Families ..... 139
Tribe/School Partnerships ..... 139
Bringing Students' Cultures Into School ..... 141

Chapter **VI: Family/School/Community Partnerships: An Interest That Comes From The Heart ..... 143**

**Aspirations for Children ..... 143**

**Between Failure and Success: Building Effective Partnerships ..... 145**
Working Together to Support Children ..... 147
Opportunities for Positive Engagement ..... 149
Catching Problems Early ..... 152

**School-based Child and Family Support programs: Fostering resiliency and Emotional Intelligence ..... 155**
Families as Resources ..... 156
Characteristics of Effective programs ..... 157

**Conclusion**

**References ..... 163**

**Appendix A:** Assessment of the Current Reality of Washington's Children ..... **175**

**Appendix B:** School Abstracts ..... **179**

**Appendix C:** A Brief History of Major Ethnic Groups in Washington State ..... **195**

**Appendix D:** Multicultural Resources for Educators ..... **203**

**Sidebars**

**Chapter II: A Caring Community of Learners: Creating a Protective Shield**
Risk and Protective Factors ..... 8
Linking Literacy With Emotional Development ..... 14
The Caring Communities of Learners: Five Interdependent Principles ..... 18
Teacher Appreciation Week Essay Contest Winner: Honoring Cynthia Chase-Spilman ..... 27

**Chapter III: Professional Development through Collaborative Inquiry**
Principles of High-Quality Professional Development from the US Department of Education ..... 37
Professional Development in Edmonds, Washington ..... 39
Professional Development through Action Research ..... 42
Building Cultural Bridges: Washington's Cheryl Koenig ..... 44
Professional Development at Hawthorne Elementary: A Conversation with Principal Betty Cobbs ..... 47

**Chapter IV: "She Was Just as Smart Being Huy-yon, but Her Grades Went Up When She Became Shirley"**
The Specter of Stigma and Racial Vulnerability ..... 54
A Conversation with DaVerne Bell, a Vancouver School District Staff Member Who Specializes in Student Advocacy,Student Equity, and Multicultural Diversity ..... 56
Some Thoughts on Cultural Pluralism ..... 61
Family Reading Nights: David Wolfle Elementary, Kingston, Washington .. 65
Eat a Bowl of Rice, Tacoma, Washington ..... 69
The Refugee and Immigrant Forum of Snohomish County, Everett, WA .... 71

**Chapter V: Learning to Read and Write**
Books and Babies Shower, Nespelem Elementary ..... 87
Characteristics of Children Who Are "Ready" to Read ..... 88
Washington Reading Corps ..... 91
A Conversation with Liz Padilla Flynn, Pasco School District Bilingual Specialist ..... 93
Washington Literacy Task Force ..... 98
Selecting a Book for Your Child ..... 102
Take Home Program: Naval Avenue Elementary, Bremerton, Washington... 108
Kinder Nights: Garfield Elementary, Toppenish, Washington ..... 111
Teaching Reading Using Tulalip Literature at Tulalip Elementary, Marysville, Washington ..... 119
Young Authors' Conference: Naval Avenue Elementary, Bremerton, Washington ..... 128
The Lushootseed Language ..... 136
Benefits of the Tulalip-Based Classroom ..... 138

**Chapter VI: Family/School/Community Partnerships: An Interest that Comes from the Heart**
The Filipino Youth Empowerment Project, Seattle, Washington ..... 145
Getting to Know the Community, the Parents, and the Children ..... 147
Washington State Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement Project ..... 149
Newsletters ..... 151
Tacoma Washington's Family Involvement Center ..... 154
PELT: Parent Effectiveness Leadership Training ..... 158

# Chapter I

## Introduction

*What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy.* (John Dewey)

The current emphasis on high academic standards has highlighted the still large educational achievement gaps among the nation's racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. There is increasing awareness that the most important challenge in education today is eliminating these gaps, which often are identified as early as kindergarten and develop rapidly in the first three years of school (National Task Force on Minority High Achievement, 1999).

Between 1970 and 1990, substantial gains in achievement were made by minority groups. In the mid 1990s, the gap in average National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) math and reading scores between White and Black 17-year-olds was about a third less than it had been in the early 1970s. However, minority gains have been modest in the 1990s; in some instances, ground may have been lost relative to Whites (National Task Force on Minority High Achievement, 1999). In addition, despite the fact that on all major indices, today's students either equal or outperform previous generations, socioeconomic status remains one of the most powerful predictors of students' academic achievement (Pearson, 1997).

While the generally high achievement of American children should be recognized, most educators and policymakers agree that in order to compete for middle-class jobs in today's "information age," students will need advanced verbal reasoning and problem-solving skills. They must be able to use basic literacy skills, as well as higher order critical-thinking skills: to analyze, compare and contrast, follow the sequence of an argument, and synthesize complex texts. In other words, schools are now expected to educate all students to levels of proficiency that, historically, only 25 percent of students attained (Allington, 1994).

This expectation has placed new pressures on schools, at a time when many families are struggling to balance the demands of home and work, and when high levels of poverty among young children continue to place a large number of children at risk for school failure. Yet, race alone puts a child at risk in our nation's schools. Going back to the 1960s, there is an extensive body of research showing that Black, Hispanic, and Native American students at virtually all socioeconomic levels do not perform as well as their White and Asian counterparts. On the 1994 NAEP 12$^{th}$ grade reading test, at all parent education levels, African American and Latino students had lower average reading scores than Whites (National Task Force on Minority High Achievement, 1999).

## Washington School Children

As in the rest of the nation, Washington's population of school children is becoming increasingly diverse, and this diversity is projected to increase even more in the decades to come. Children of color made up nearly 23 percent of Washington's children in 1998, up from 12 percent in 1980 (Washington Kids Count, 2000). Of all children in Washington's public schools in the 1999-2000 school year, 9.6 percent were Hispanic, 7.2 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander, 5 percent were African American, 2.7 percent were American Indian or Alaska Native, and 75.3 percent were White (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, n.d.) (see Appendix A for a more detailed statistical picture).

Thirty-four percent of the Hispanic population and 24 percent of the Asian and Pacific Islander population live in households where the primary language spoken is not English (Washington Kids Count, 2000). In all, 169 languages are spoken in Washington's 181 school districts, with 88 languages spoken in Seattle Public Schools alone.

In the state of Washington, as in other states, a disproportionate number of economically disadvantaged and minority students continue to perform poorly on essential indicators of educational success. As reported by the state's education agency, these disproportionate numbers are historically reflected in a number of ways: poor performance on tests; overrepresentation in special education; high suspension and expulsion rates; high dropout rates; high crime rates; and limited parental involvement with school. Although progress has been made, current school-level data still show that far fewer Hispanic, Native American, and African American fourth-graders met standards on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) than did White children.

**Percent of students meeting fourth-grade standards, 1999 - 2000**

| | Hispanic | Asian/Pacific Islander | African American | Native American | White |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Math | 18 | 46 | 19 | 25 | 47 |
| Reading | 39 | 67 | 48 | 47 | 72 |
| Writing | 21 | 50 | 25 | 23 | 43 |
| Listening | 46 | 61 | 52 | 54 | 70 |

## The Unity Project

Recognizing that the level of family and community involvement in schooling is a strong predictor of student success or failure, the Unity Project was designed to facilitate strong family/school/community partnerships in order to increase the academic and personal success of historically underachieving students. The project began with a focus on the gap in performance of African American students, compared to Whites. In response to these concerns, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) staff asked leaders in education from around the state to bring their concerns to a forum.

The forum quickly expanded to include other ethnic groups. From these initial forums, which addressed racial and societal factors that affect academic performance, more formalized groups were formed. In 1997, OSPI brought together five distinctive groups (each made up of different

ethnic groups) designated to act as advisory "think tanks." Made up of educators and community members of African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American backgrounds, and educators working in high poverty communities, the Think Tanks developed comprehensive action plans and strategies to meet identified needs in their respective groups. From the beginning, the focus of these plans was on improving the interaction with and among families, communities, and schools. The plans document the Think Tanks' recommendations to achieve the overall project mission and purpose:

> To assist OSPI to design and implement strategies that unite families, schools, and at-large communities into a high performance system that guarantees success for all students, particularly underachieving students.

"School reform isn't making it," says John Pope, OSPI Program Administrator, continuing:

> We know that the involvement of traditional families in their children's education has a positive impact on student achievement. But minorities are underutilized. Few people have been reached through school outreach efforts and few have benefited. Education has to become a conversation in the household. The strategic plans within and between minority communities document aspirations. The educational system needs to address these aspirations. The plans should be given to the communities themselves and used as a tool for organizing and informing people, not to organize and advise the state. If the plans are part of the office, that's not enough. They need to be part of the community. These are our schools; we elect our school board. It has to be bottom up.

Among the objectives of the Unity Project are:

- 90 percent of the 1999 kindergartners will read at grade level by third grade
- All students will have an Academic Improvement Plan that is developed by students and families and supported by teachers

Initially, each Think Tank identified three to seven demonstration schools that have a high percentage of historically underachieving students. OSPI staff provides onsite technical assistance and support to these schools. In addition, OSPI encourages Think Tank members to each adopt a school—to make a personal conviction to get to know and support the school, and respond to their needs in the project. Currently there are 28 demonstration elementary schools, representing all areas of the state.

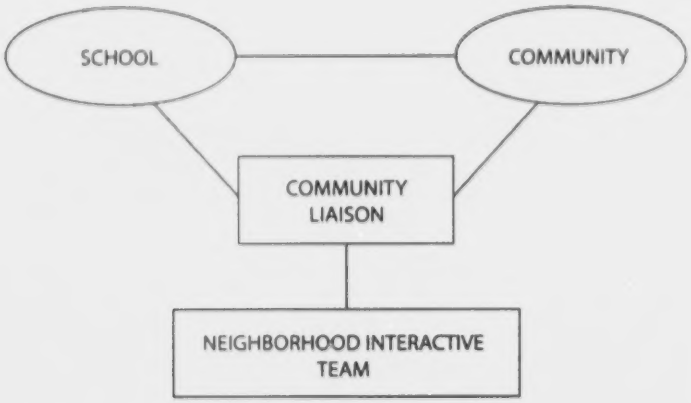
Over the last year, teachers and other school staff, parents, and community volunteers have had opportunities to work in teams and to network with each other at OSPI-sponsored practitioner workshops, conferences, and forums. At these gatherings, teams share effective strategies, as well as challenges, and develop action plans to improve teaching and learning (see Appendix B). According to Principal Dixie Husser at David Wolfle Elementary in North Kitsap:

> The workshops help you focus; we work in our own teams, but we share with other teams. Rather than create a whole new plan with new goals, we worked the plan into our school-wide learning improvement plan. The goal is to combine our Unity work

with existing projects. Teachers are overwhelmed as it is and under a lot of stress; we didn't want to just add more to their plate.

In addition, principals from the 28 elementary schools have had opportunities to meet and share concerns and action plans. This year, a Multiethnic Think Tank was formed to discuss the sameness of need across all think tanks and to look at issues with the goal of influencing policy at the state level. OSPI assists with the organizational vision, and has organized a meeting of policy stakeholders. While working with the 28 demonstration schools will remain a priority over the next year, a major emphasis for this school year will be on community mobilization, including forming partnerships with faith-based organizations and other community groups.

In order to help communities organize and improve their relationships with schools, OSPI has formed partnerships with the Corporation for National Service-AmeriCorps and World Vision. Community Liaison positions will be created and piloted in seven of the Unity Project demonstration schools this year, as illustrated by the graphic below. The persons serving in these positions will be Corporation for National Service members, and ideally they will be indigenous to the community. In order to enhance their links to the community, the liaisons will not be hired or supervised by the schools; rather, they will be responsible to Neighborhood Interactive Teams made up of nine to 11 neighborhood residents. As Corporation for National Service members, the Community Liaisons will be eligible to receive money to pay for college and a small living allowance.




World Vision, a faith-based organization that works worldwide, will aid these seven demonstration schools by providing school supplies and other materials, and funding for several programs including tutorial programs and parenting classes. World Vision will also implement a program whereby students and parents earn points that can be redeemed for rewards, such as shoes, backpacks, or clothing. The goal of this reward system is to help parents to be more effectively involved in their child's education. For example, one school held a school supplies carnival where children earned their supplies through participating in games and contests. Families attended the carnival with their children, and were able to meet with other parents and teachers. The event also served as a kick-off for recruiting school volunteers, including families and community members.

According to project spokespersons, two major strands run throughout the Unity Project:

- Nothing can be counted as progress in a community until the families and community play a significant role in helping its children become well-served, show healthy development and steady, sustained advances in school achievement
- Families and communities must be empowered to expand their capacity to develop and implement strategies that enable schools to produce highly capable, successful, and productive students

### About This Study

In this qualitative study, NWREL staff has spent the past year documenting promising educational strategies and practices throughout the state of Washington, with particular emphasis on the Unity school/family/community partnerships. Interviews, classroom observations, and examination of school documents were used to gather information on the perspectives of school and university personnel, students, families, and community members. Our questions and data gathering addressed such topics as resiliency, family and community involvement, effective literacy practices, cultural continuity, professional development, and, above all, expectations and aspirations for children's education.

Qualitative research is located within the Max Weber tradition that emphasizes "verstehen," the interpretative understanding of human interaction. Qualitative researchers are concerned with "what their informants are experiencing, how they interpret their experience, and how they themselves structure the social world in which they live" (Bogdan & Biklin, 1982, p. 47).

Over the past year, a diverse team of NWREL staff and members of Washington communities conducted more than 75 indepth interviews with Think Tank participants, university consortium staff, school personnel, families, older children, and community members. We utilized a semi-structured interview approach, designed to provide a framework within which respondents expressed their own understandings in their own terms. In this way, multiple perspectives were included and explored. Questions for interviews with Think Tank participants, school personnel, families, and community members included:

- What are your beliefs about the purposes of education?
- What are your aspirations for the children in your community?
- What do you think are the main factors that lead to children's school failure and success?
- What do you think are some of the reasons for the underachievement of some minority groups? What are some of the solutions?
- What do you feel are the most pressing professional development needs of teachers?
- What educational experiences related to children's culture and home language should the school provide? What *does* the school provide?
- What do you consider effective family involvement and family support strategies, activities? What kind of activities, strategies does your child's school offer? What do you think are the barriers to effective practice?

- What are the ways that this school is a caring community? What can schools do to become more of a caring community? What are some of the barriers to creating a caring community?

### About This Document

In addition to documenting promising educational practices and perspectives of those interviewed, we also include a discussion of research relevant to educationally disadvantaged and culturally diverse students. Research on school restructuring has identified a number of commitments and competencies that lead to improved outcomes for children, including:

- Careful attention to children's emotional development in a challenging and responsive curriculum that enhances children's natural curiosity, builds upon present interests, and helps all children meet high academic standards
- Professional development that emphasizes reflective study of teaching and learning
- Culturally responsive and inclusive teaching
- A focus on language and literacy in the early years to build a strong foundation for all learning
- Strong family/school/community partnerships

In the following chapters, we explore all of these topics. Throughout these chapters, we include detailed descriptions of promising educational practices in Washington schools, as well as barriers to implementing these practices. In order to provide a format that allows easy access to information by busy practitioners, we have used sidebars to present summaries of promising practices, research, and conversations with selected interviewees. These materials are intended to encourage those involved in designing and implementing home/school/community partnerships and authentic learning experiences in the classroom to engage in dialogue and reflection—activities essential for thoughtful learning.

While we focused our interviews on schools and communities participating in the Unity Project, we have also included the views of school personnel and community members throughout the state. The stories and viewpoints of families, school personnel, Tribal elders, Think Tank and community members are woven throughout the discussion of research, ensuring that concrete examples are provided to link research with practice, and that a wide range of perspectives is included.

Cummins (1986) suggested that "a major reason previous attempts at educational reform have been unsuccessful is that the relationships between teachers and students and between schools and communities have remained essentially unchanged." The Unity Project attempts to alter these relationships by encouraging and supporting strong and equitable school/family/community partnerships. We hope that the aspirations, concerns, and stories of all those who graciously agreed to share their views with us will inform, not only school reform efforts, but also the efforts of the Unity Project to create a more just and caring society. As Ferguson, Ferguson, and Taylor (1991) observe, "Interpretivist research empowers by connecting people together to hear each others' stories. Interpretivism pursues social justice one story at a time" (p. 497).

# Chapter II

## A Caring Community Of Learners:
### Creating A Protective Shield

*I truly believe in my heart, regardless of the home life that children are coming from, if they have that safe inclusive haven, that respectful haven in the school, you are making a difference.* (DaVerne Bell, 2000)

The factory-model school, with an emphasis on competition, hierarchical authority, and a view of teachers and principals as interchangeable parts, still exerts a strong influence on our educational system. However, based on a synthesis of literature about human growth and development, Argyris (cited in Clark & Astuto, 1994) concluded that hierarchical, bureaucratic work environments are more likely to lead to immature behaviors, such as passivity, dependence, and lack of self-control and awareness.

In contrast, schools organized as caring communities have been shown to foster a shared sense of responsibility, self-direction and a stronger motivation to learn, experimentation, less absenteeism, greater social competence, respect for individual differences, and higher educational expectations and academic performance (Clark & Astuto, 1994; Lewis, Schaps, & Watson, 1995; Newmann, 1993). Caring communities are defined by Lewis, Schaps, and Watson as "places where teachers and students care about and support each other, actively participate in and contribute to activities and decisions, feel a sense of belonging and identification, and have a shared sense of purpose and common values." A central goal of these schools, as a Northwest principal put it, is "to create an atmosphere where children and their families feel a sense of trust, attachment, and a sense of belonging not only to the school, but to their community as well."

In a caring community of learners, children's emotional and intellectual development is nurtured through supportive relationships with teachers, mentors, family advocates, and other staff members. To do so requires not only careful attention to interactions and relationships between teachers and children and among children, but throughout the school and community as well. A mother of four and a social services worker in a rural Washington town stressed that ensuring success for all children takes a joint effort by the entire community:

> Basically the solutions are where people just need to start caring for other people, you know. It does take a village to raise a child. I think that if we start stressing that more, where people start really realizing, "Hey, it doesn't just take me as a parent to raise this child. It doesn't just take me as a teacher to raise this child." It takes the doctor, it takes the counselor, it takes the nurse, it takes the neighbor, it takes a complete stranger that sees a child doing something wrong and you know, to take a minute to say, hey, you shouldn't be doing that. It just—it takes everybody, you know, as a community to work together for the well-being of their children.

In schools that foster resiliency for all children, academic and emotional literacy go hand in hand.

## Resilient Children: Keepers of the Dream

The concepts of resilience and protective factors are the positive counterparts to the constructs of vulnerability and risk factors (Werner & Smith, 1992). Resilient children, called "keepers of the dream" by Garmezy, Masten, and Tellegsan (1984), are children who remain competent despite exposure to misfortune or to stressful events (Rutter, 1985). One of the key elements identified in resiliency is a sense of self-efficacy, which allows the child to cope successfully with challenges. Rather than behaving as though they are at the mercy of fate, resilient children take an active stance toward an obstacle or difficulty (Rutter; Werner & Smith).

The capacity to bounce back requires the ability to see the difficulty as a problem that can be worked on, overcome, changed, endured, or resolved in some way. In addition, resiliency requires reasonable persistence, with an ability to know when "enough is enough" and a capacity to develop a range of strategies and skills to bring to deal with the problem, which can be used in a flexible way (Demos, 1989). Finally, in order for resiliency to flourish, one's efforts must be successful and gratifying in some way, at least some of the time.

According to Robin Karr-Morse and Meredith S. Wiley, authors of *Ghosts from the Nursery: Tracing the Roots of Violence* (1997), characteristics of resilient adults include the capacity for empathy, self-control, and problem solving. Researchers have identified a number of protective factors that foster resiliency:

- Caring and support (particularly the opportunity to form a supportive relationship with at least one adult)
- Consistently communicating clear, positive expectations to the child
- Opportunities for meaningful participation in the social environment (Benard, 1993)

Children are not either at risk or not at risk, points out child-development expert James Garbarino. "It's more than the absence of risk, it's the presence of opportunities," he explains. "Put simply, while some children score '-1' (risk factor) and others score '0' (absence of risk), a third group scores '+1' (an opportunity factor) (1995, p. 153). The goal for families, educators, and human service providers is not just to reduce risk; the goal is to help all children to be in the "+1" group.

### Risk and Protective Factors

- The concepts of resilience and protective factors are the positive counterparts to the constructs of vulnerability and risk factors. Resilient children are children who remain competent despite exposure to misfortune or to stressful events (Rutter, 1985; Werner & Smith, 1992).
- Dispositions that act as protective factors include an active, problem-solving approach and a sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Resilient children are characterized by a belief in their power to shape and have an impact on their experience.

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- Caring and support, high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation are protective factors for children found in families, schools, and communities (Benard, 1993). One of the key protective factors for children is the availability of consistent adults who provide them with a secure base for the development of trust, autonomy, and initiative (Werner & Smith, 1992).
- The presence of a single risk factor typically does not threaten positive development. In situations where a child is vulnerable, the interaction of risk and protective factors determines the course of development. For example, growing up in a family that provides a sensitive, responsive home environment can offset the adverse effects of poverty.
- If multiple risk factors accumulate and are not offset by compensating protective factors, healthy development is compromised (Schorr, 1989; Werner & Smith 1992). A child who is exposed to drugs in utero, and who is raised by abusive and/or neglectful parents in a dangerous neighborhood is at high risk for impaired social and cognitive competence.
- Poverty increases the likelihood that risk factors in the environment will not be offset by protective factors. Poverty is often a constellation of risk factors that combine to produce "rotten outcomes" (Schorr, 1989). Garbarino (1990) describes high-risk neighborhoods as "an ecological conspiracy against children."
- When a child faces negative factors at home, at school, and in the neighborhood, the negative effect of these factors is multiplied rather than simply added together, because these conditions interact with and reinforce each other (Schorr, 1989; Werner & Smith, 1992). For example, a child who experiences risk factors such as maltreatment at home, who lives in a dangerous neighborhood, and who attends a poor-quality childcare setting and school is unlikely to develop in a healthy manner.

The concept of resiliency has contributed a great deal to our understanding of how to provide supportive environments for children, and it has provided a much-needed shift from children's supposed deficits to recognizing and building on strengths. However, a simplistic interpretation of the resiliency literature may lead to the belief that that all life hazards offer opportunities for growth, and that some children are invulnerable to stress.

During the 1970s, Anthony (1974) introduced the analogy of the three dolls—one made of glass, one made of plastic, and the third made of steel—to contrast children in their vulnerability to adversity. Under the blow of the hammer, the first doll shatters and the second is permanently scarred, but the third doll only emits a fine metallic sound—appearing to be invulnerable. While Anthony and other resiliency researchers did not intend for policymakers to base practices on the notion that children should be invulnerable to an onslaught of life-threatening hazards, the concept of resilience became widely popular—particularly the idea of invulnerable children. People came to consider that there were some children so constitutionally tough that they could not give way under the pressure and stress of adversity (Rutter, 1985). Rutter characterizes the notion as "wrongheaded" in at least three respects:

- The resistance to stress is relative, not absolute
- The basis of the resistance is both environmental and constitutional
- The degree of resistance is not a fixed quantity; rather it varies over time and according to circumstances
- Risk increases substantially when children experience two risk factors, and risk is multiplied (rather than merely added) as the number of risk factors increases

Life hazards are particularly likely to be encountered by children in poverty. Poverty has been called a constellation of risk factors because it increases the likelihood that numerous risk factors are present simultaneously: in health care and health, housing, support systems, schools, child care, and neighborhoods. Farber and Egeland (1987) caution that we should be responsible in discussing children's invulnerability lest policy makers come to harbor the belief that if children are strong enough, they can survive and overcome adversity of all kinds. All of us, particularly young children, are dependent on the support of family, friends, schools, and communities for healthy development. Helen Malagon, Washington's supervisor of bilingual education, observes:

> The undertaking of the Unity Project is the concept of the whole village— by excluding many of our families, we are missing a wealth of knowledge that can be shared. Washington State's Essential Learning Requirements call for building upon prior knowledge and experience. This is critical because it applies both to families and students. How do we build upon this if we don't know what the foundation holds?
>
> Teaching language minority students is not just a matter of needing a few instructional strategies. It's about acceptance. It's about saying to them "I welcome you here and I'm ready to teach you." It is critical that educators know their students, work *with* them, help them make connections that engage them in learning, and help them maintain a sense of who they are and what they can become. Look in children's eyes, they will tell you what words will not.

A central tenet of the Unity Project is that schools alone cannot solve all social problems. But by forming partnerships with families and communities, and by understanding school as a context for a child's development, they can reduce vulnerability and foster resiliency for all children. The three protective factors identified by resiliency researchers can guide educators' efforts to nurture positive outcomes for all children.

### Caring and Support

> *The real tragedy in failing to reach even the youngest children in our care does not stem from the children, or their much publicized "lack of preparation" for school, or their "unreadiness to learn," but from our lack of response to their personal and developmental histories—in other words, to who they are and how they think.* (Cooper, 1993)

Research in child development leaves little doubt that a child's healthy development is based, in large part, on a secure relationship with consistent caregivers. In two longitudinal studies of high-risk children (Sroufe, 1992; Werner & Smith, 1992), a secure attachment with caregivers was the most important protective factor in their ability to remain competent and confident, despite a number of risk factors. The capacity to care about another person, to imagine and understand how others think and feel, begins in these first relationships. The experience of forming strong early connections with a caring adult builds a solid social and emotional foundation, critical for the development of healthy relationships and for readiness for school.

A new report from the Child Mental Health Foundation and Agencies Network, titled *A New Beginning,* states that, "Social and emotional school readiness is critical to a successful kindergarten transition, early school success, and even later accomplishments in the workplace." Yet all too often, children and families have little access to programs and practices that promote emotional health. Arriving at school without the social and emotional competence they need to succeed places children at high risk for school failure.

Washington's Readiness to Learn Program (RTL) provides a link between education and formal human services by authorizing grants to local school-linked, community-based consortia that develop and implement strategies to help ensure children arrive at school everyday "ready to learn." The goal of the RTL initiative is to enable local leaders of schools and human services agencies to work together to build a more comprehensive and constructive system of services and supports for children and families. Established in 1993 as part of the Education Reform Act, the program was created to reduce barriers to student success in school associated with factors outside of the school setting.

Family liaison workers located at schools coordinate a wide range of community resources that respond to individual student needs. Early prevention of problem behaviors and academic failure at the elementary school level is a primary goal. Family service workers may monitor academic progress, help families access food, housing, clothing, and medical and mental health services, organize family literacy nights, collaborate with preschool providers, and help teachers become more aware of family dynamics that may affect a child's achievement. In the 117 school districts now served by RTL programs, many students who have been referred for problems are improving attendance, reducing the number of behavioral problems in the classroom, and improving their grades.

Still, many Washington teachers, like teachers throughout the United States, reported feeling overwhelmed by the increasingly complex needs of children and families. "Teachers need more training and support for dealing with challenging kids," says Kelley Daniels, learning specialist at David Wolfle Elementary School:

> Before they react, teachers need a clear understanding of where a child is coming from; to look beyond the behavior to what is eliciting it. Part of it is a cultural issue. I think some teachers don't really understand that. I think that most teachers want to treat all kids the same, but basically what you are looking at is each individual child and what are the needs, where are they coming from; and how to help meet them so they can manage their own behavior.
>
> When kids are coming from different backgrounds you will handle it differently. In reality you are just responding to each child's needs. For example, the kids that can't sit down—I ask, physically, what's going on? Did they have breakfast this morning? Are they uncomfortable with what we're dong in the classroom. If I am just punitive and I don't look at what some of the causes of the behavior are, I won't get very far.

Large class sizes (up to 32 kids per class) add to the difficulties that many teachers face. In a busy classroom, children who are most in need of a close, supportive relationship with a caring adult may instead behave in ways that result in isolation, punishment, or simply neglect. Principal Dixie Husser notes, "The kids who act out will always let you know they need attention. You try not to let the quiet ones fall through the cracks, and you can't leave out the middle either. It's a big juggling act." A mother of a teenager who dropped out in middle school worried that her son had not gotten the attention he needed to stay in school:

> If teachers have a lot of children, and they can't see each child individually, maybe they aren't able to pay the attention that each child needs, for the teacher to motivate them, for the children to feel proud because the teacher said something good about them and their work.

Teachers' lack of awareness of cultural issues and family dynamics may add to a downward spiral of a child's academic self-image. A Native American mother of two young children explains:

> Our tribal history is one of colonialism, oppression, and assimilation. It was not so long ago. Alcoholism, child abuse, domestic violence are unhealthy ways of dealing with our horrendous history. Some kids do have tough lifestyles, rough environments. Schools and tribes need to work together to help children when their families cannot provide a healthy, stable environment. Some kids are angry, spiteful, resentful, and even hateful. Some are in foster care of living with relatives. They are often treated badly in schools as a result of their behavior.
>
> What they need is a supportive environment—to be surrounded with love, attention, positive affirmation. Instead, they are disciplined and segregated. A vicious circle occurs and everyone is confused and lost. There needs to be a team approach. There need to be people who go that extra mile, to work one-on-one with kids. We need to be able to bond with children, to understand risk and protective factors, to help children learn self-discipline.

Clearly, children's developmental histories, which unfold within the context of their families and communities, have a profound effect on subsequent attitudes, behaviors, and adaptation to the school environment. "It is untenable that the science on risk factors for social and emotional difficulties among young kids is largely disconnected from the policies or programs for these children," said Kimberly Hoagwood, Associate Director for Child and Adolescent Research at the National Institute of Mental Health. Understanding risk factors and implementing strategies to address them, knowing how to deal effectively with challenging behaviors, and helping children learn empathy and self-control are critical skills for all teachers.

The success of child psychiatrist James Comer in turning around low-performing schools is based on the guiding belief that learning requires a strongly accepting relationship between teacher and student. In his recent book, *Waiting for a Miracle*, he writes: "What people who have turned poor schools into good ones will tell you is that students' success is largely the result of relationships, climate, child development, and *then* learning" (p. 173).

The relationships between children and teachers, while not parental, should reflect the same kind of sensitive, responsive interactions that are the hallmarks of a healthy attachment between parents and children, say researchers. In our interviews, one of the most frequently cited ways for teachers to make a difference in a child's or parent's life was to show they cared. A father of five children put it this way:

> The teachers and everyone that works there [at the school]—they shouldn't just be there because it's their job. They should put themselves in the place of the parents, or of the student, to try to help him, not only because it's their job. And when they say something, that they don't just say okay, that's it. They should say it more. . . from the heart.

In a longitudinal study of a multiracial cohort of 698 infants on the Hawaiian Island of Kauai, Werner and Smith (1992) identified children who, despite multiple risk factors, were able to lead productive lives, exhibiting competence, confidence, and caring. One of the key protective factors for these children was the availability of persons who provided them with a secure base for the development of trust, autonomy, and initiative. Among the most frequently encountered positive role models in the lives of the children of Kauai, outside of the family circle, was a favorite teacher. For the resilient youngsters, a special teacher was not just an instructor for academic skills, but also a confidant and positive model for personal identification. Other researchers have found:

- In a recent study of more than 400 children, Pianta, Steinberg, and Rollins (1995) found that teacher-child relationships in kindergarten were predictive of children's competence and behavioral adjustment in the first three years of school.
- Dr. James Comer, Director of the Yale University Study Center School Development Program, reports that in their work with 650 schools, they found that traumatized children who formed a relationship with a caring, reliable, responsible teacher made strong academic gains (1997). "With continuity, trust, and bonding came a willingness to open up and take risks that academic learning requires," he says (p. 54). He suggests that schools provide opportunities for teachers to keep students for two years.
- In a case study of a first-grade teacher, Pederson, Faucher, and Eaton (1978), show the impact of a teacher who formed relationships with students that supported independence, made them feel worthwhile, motivated them to achieve, and provided them with support to interpret and cope with environmental demands. This teacher's students differed on dropout rates, academic achievement, behavioral competence, and adjustment in the adult world.
- Pianta and Steinberg (1992) found that children who were at risk for retention were less likely to be retained if they developed a positive relationship with their teacher during the year.
- The relationship between students and their teachers remains important for children throughout their school years. In longitudinal and ethnographic studies, youth of all ages, all colors, and all places tell us over and over again that what they want is a teacher who cares (Benard, 1993). In a study of adolescents, Stanford University's Center for Research on the Context of Secondary School Training found, "The number of student references to wanting caring teachers is so great that we believe it speaks to the quiet desperation and loneliness of many adolescents in today's society" (Phelan et al., 1992, p .698).

- Studies of school dropouts repeatedly identify the lack of anyone who cared about them as the main reason for leaving school (Higgins, 1988). In a study of high school students living on American Indian reservations, over a third of the dropouts from Montana and almost half of the Navajo and Ute dropouts felt their teachers didn't care about them (Deyhle, 1992). When asked about good teachers, students consistently explained that a good teacher was "one who cares."

### Linking Literacy With Emotional Development

*Michelle McDonald, a former fourth grade teacher at Captain Gray Elementary in Pasco, Washington describes a literacy activity that "became a time of reflection, sharing, and empathy."*

Last year in my fourth grade class I was working hard to integrate higher-level thinking, connecting emotions and background experiences, and comprehension into my reading curriculum. I chose to use a book called *Maniac McGee* by Jerry Spinelli in a literature circle. I chose this book because of the content of the story. The story is about a boy who runs away from a very dysfunctional home. Throughout his adventures he encounters racial segregation in the town in which he lives, east vs. west (Black vs. White). I introduced the book by describing the basic premise of the book. I began trying to elicit from the students any experiences they may have had with racism.

The discussion was lagging until I started talking about a movie that the book reminded me of. I shared the story line from the movie *The Outsider* produced by Francis Ford Coppola from the book written by S. E. Hinton, titled, *The Greaser vs. the Socials*. This happened to be one of my favorite movies as a child. I told the students about my running home from school as fast as I could to see the opening credits when it happened to be on HBO. They got a real kick out of hearing a personal story about their teacher. Once I described the story they began to come up with lots of examples. They shared about movies and stories they had seen or read, and about personal experiences. This really started the discussion off on the right foot.

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**Nurturing emotional literacy.** Research has shown that many children, particularly boys, go into the adolescent years with a restricted language for expressing emotions, which psychologist James Garbarino describes as "emotional illiteracy." This keeps the boy locked up because he may not be able to articulate his experience and he may be ashamed that he can't. But the beginnings of emotional illiteracy start much earlier, Garbarino points out.

By kindergarten a girl is six times more likely to use the word "love" than is a boy, and by the age of eight or nine, many boys are beginning to lose facial expression. Garbarino notes, "You can watch the loss of facial expression in boys as they turn into men. By the age of eight or nine, a boy is measuring everything he does on one dimension—from strong to weak. Many boys feel required to express only a narrow band of what they truly feel" (1999).

Creating a common vocabulary and language for helping children deal with their emotions and behavior ties literacy to emotional development. Because the goal is for children to learn to think for themselves and to care about others, behavior is not seen as something to be "managed." Instead, children are helped to think through their emotions, to reflect on their actions, and to imagine how others think and feel. Author and educator Alfie Kohn points out: "To help students become ethical people, as opposed to people who merely do what they are told, we cannot merely tell them what to do. We have to help them figure out--for themselves and with each other--how one ought to act" (1996, p. 4).

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We began reading together. In the beginning chapter of the book the little boy finally snaps during a school program and starts screaming at the top of his lungs to his Aunt and Uncle (with whom he lives). He begins to run and run and never comes back. I stopped and began to talk to the students about how the little boy felt. I got the typical canned answers: bad, mad, sad, etc. I wanted more than that. I wanted the students to really think and connect with how he was feeling. I kept probing, "What do you mean by mad?" "Where in his body do you think he felt that emotion?" "Have you ever felt that way?" The students really started to connect with the feelings of the character. They even shared some personal experiences of times they felt overwhelmed with emotion and cried, yelled, etc.

Throughout the story we would stop and have long conversation about how the characters were feeling, why they were acting the way they did. Students began to talk beautifully about the feelings illustrated in the book. It even began to spill into other areas of the day. The students became more eloquent about sharing their own feelings as well as predicting the feelings of their fellow students.

Shortly after finishing the story of *Maniac McGee*, one of my students brought me the *Diary of Anne Frank* and asked if I would read it out loud to the class. She had been reading it during sustained silent reading (SSR) and thought it would be a good book for all the class to hear. So, knowing the story myself, I gave the students a mini-history lesson and tried to connect it to the story of *Maniac McGee* to provide the students a foundation from which to build. Once we got started, the students really were hooked; they wanted me to read and read and read and read. I would read, we would stop and discuss, I would read some more, and before I knew it an hour had passed like a minute. Our read-aloud book had become more than a transition between subjects or a relaxing listening time. It truly became a time of reflection, sharing, and empathy.

One very touching conversion we had dealt with crying. During this same time my fiancée's sister's house burnt down. She had two small children (one the same age as the students in my class) I shared this experience with the students, again to get them to connect with others emotionally. The students became very interested in the story and began to follow it in the newspaper. One day a student brought me a newspaper article about the family. I began to read it and tears started steaming down my cheeks. I was a little embarrassed, but I thought it was OK because it tied into connecting with people emotionally.

One of the students asked me, "Why are your eyes watering?" I told him, "because I am crying." He asked why. I told him when something touches your heart it is OK to cry. Well (this all ties together), when we were reading the story it came to a very touching part and a handful of the girls got teary. One of the boys said something like, "what are you crying for?" Another boy said, "Don't you remember what Miss McDonald said? She said when something touched your heart it is OK to cry."

As a result of our discussion and sharing I truly believe that students got a better understanding of the text and connected with it on many, many levels.

A social services worker and mother of two children described what can happen in a classroom where mutual respect is glaringly absent. After placing her daughter in summer school to ease the transition from elementary to middle school, she went to visit the classroom. Instead of extra support, the children and the teacher had established an adversarial relationship that severely impaired the learning environment:

> At first I thought, "Gosh that's pretty sad, because this is the faculty that our kids are listening to." And then I thought, "Wow, the teacher is dealing with children that don't want to be in summer school. These are the kids that the teacher has to listen to." It seemed like all the kids got a degree in being a smartaleck as soon as they got into

middle school. So they're doing anything that they can to get kicked out of class while she's trying to teach. Then the attitude of the faculty became a "no-tolerance" attitude whatsoever. It made them look like strict authoritarian people and that they didn't really care about the kids; it was like nobody wanted to be there and they were just there, you know?

I was thinking about my anthropology teacher, who has a background in communication and different minority groups and cultures and how we evolved as human being. I was wishing that he could go through the school and he could just observe the students and the faculty and then give them a report of what he saw. I just think that everybody would have been wowed, because he would have been able to teach them some techniques to make it a little bit lighter for the kids and not be so hard—not be a place where they didn't want to be.

In schools that foster emotional literacy, reading stories aloud, particularly stories that offer rich opportunities to discuss emotions, is a frequent activity. Teachers can use reading aloud as a springboard for discussing times when children have felt frightened and lonely, proud and happy. By helping children to relate stories to their lives and to other stories they have read, children develop critical thinking skills and build vocabulary and concept knowledge. Open-ended questions during and after reading keep children involved and encourage reflection: "How do you think Pisca felt when her dad said he was proud of her?" "When you have courage, does it mean you are not afraid?" "Can you remember a time when you felt like the Ugly Duckling?" "What does it mean to feel accepted?"

Knowing that emotional competency is learned through interactions with peers and adults, school personnel emphasize the crucial role they play as models of attitudes and behaviors. A principal in a Northwest classroom notes, "There may be some place where the expression 'do as I say — not as I do' is effective advice, but school is not the place. We constantly ask, 'How do we talk to kids? How do we interact with kids? What behaviors are we modeling?'" At the same time, children are helped to reflect on their own feelings, and to increase awareness of others' feelings. "Look at her face," a teacher might advise, "How do you think she feels?"

Helping children express thoughts, feelings, and opinions verbally and in writing can begin in preschool and continue throughout a child's school years. At Helen Gordon Child Development Center in Portland, Oregon, children are encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings—in letters to friends and parents, in poems, and in stories. Supported by teachers who write children's dictated words just as they are spoken, children write about rejection, fears of abandonment, and injustice. As Steve Franzel, a teacher of three through six-year-olds, says, "Language becomes a way to support children's power—their ability to deal with a peer, with conflict, with sad or scary feelings. Words empower them to express themselves--to handle life." Franzel explains:

I usually use writing as a means to a goal, to validate children's feelings about separation, to help resolve conflict--as crisis prevention. I hear someone screaming and I go over to help them use their words to express their needs and feelings. Then I ask the child, "Do you want to write it down, write a letter?"

The process is such an integral part of the day's activities that the children explain it to new adults in the classroom and expect them to take dictation, just as they might expect their shoes to be tied. Frequently throughout the day, children use writing to sort out their feelings and at times to come to terms with their own behavior. For example, the following letter was written after four-year-old Tony watched his classmate leave for the doctor to have stitches in his forehead, following an altercation involving a broom. As Tony thought about what to write to Mark, anger was replaced by a sense of responsibility:

> I'm sorry Mark. I hit you with the broom. Why did you want to take my broom? I was just about to color with the chalk and you were trying to take my broom. I was coloring in five seconds. I wanted to give him a hug before he left.

Four-year-old Aaron expressed her complex thoughts on friendship and rejection in a prose poem written about and to her friend Olivia:

> Olivia is a good friend.
> Sometimes she doesn't play with me.
> Today she said, "Don't follow me."
> I was upset.
> Then I was angry.
> Then I said, "Bad Olivia."
> Then I walked away.
> Just like Olivia
>
> Read this note and then you will
> Find out about me
> And your friend Aaron.
> Love, Aaron
> To Olivia

Using books and stories can tie literacy to emotional development and help children examine and articulate their feelings. In a Seattle Public Schools Head Start classroom, teachers read aloud Hans Christian Anderson's story of *The Ugly Duckling,* and the whole class talks about how the ugly duckling must have felt when everyone made fun of him. When a child uses a word that hurts another child's feelings, children are encouraged to call it "an Ugly Duckling word," and to make it clear that such words are not acceptable. "Ugly Duckling words are those that hurt your heart. Ugly Duckling actions are those that hurt your body," explains their teacher. At four years of age, these children are learning important lessons in empathy and are learning to stand up for themselves and each other against teasing and bullying.

Vivian Paley contends that although each child comes into the world with an instinct for kindness, it is a lesson that must be reinforced at every turn (Paley, 1999). Paley, an author and educator whose latest book, The Kindness of Children (1999), is an exploration of children's impulsive goodness, advises adults to begin having conversations with children about kindness, fairness, and justice well before kindergarten.

Listen closely to children's questions. Be alert to the fact that they are absorbing all of what is played out before them. And try not to miss any opportunity to sift through the rightness or wrongness of what unfolds, whether the child is actor or audience in the drama. Keep talking about it. Because that is the thing that is of the greatest interest to the child; what is fair, what is not fair, and why does so much of what goes on seem unfair (1999).

### The Caring Communities of Learners: Five Interdependent Principles

1. Warm, supportive, stable relationships. Schools are set up so that all members of a school community—students, teachers, staff, parents—know one another as people and view each other as collaborators in learning. Teachers carefully examine their approaches, asking, "What kind of human relationships are we fostering?"
2. Constructive learning. Good teaching fosters children's natural desire to understand their world by providing experiences that help children become more skillful, reflective, and self-critical in their pursuit of knowledge. Rather than focusing on rote learning, teachers help children make discoveries, struggle to find explanations, and grapple with evidence and views different from their own.
3. An important, challenging curriculum. Curriculum development should be driven by major long-term goals, not just short-term coverage concerns. These goals should be broadly conceived to include children's development as principled, humane citizens.
4. Intrinsic motivation. Educators need a curriculum that is worth learning and a pedagogy that helps students see why it is worth learning. Teachers introduce topics in a way that piques students' curiosity and helps them make personal connections.
5. Attention to social and ethical dimensions of learning. Everything about schooling—curriculum, teaching method, discipline, interpersonal relationships—teaches children about the human qualities we value. Teachers scrutinize disciplinary approaches to promote children's responsible behavior over the long run. Teachers engage children in shaping the norms of the class and school, so that they see that these norms are not arbitrary standards set by powerful adults, but necessary standards for the well-being of everyone. Teachers also help children develop collaborative approaches to resolving conflict, guiding them to think about the values needed for humane life in a group.

Source: Lewis, C., Schaps, E., & Watson, M. (1996, September). The caring classrooms' academic edge. Educational Leadership, pp. 16-21.

## Positive Expectations

Clearly, children develop patterns of learning and patterns of reliance on significant others to support learning that directly affect later attainment. Several studies have found long-term effects of first-, second-, and third-grade teachers' expectations on children's performance in high school and beyond (Entwisle, 1995). Because the disposition to learn, in large part, depends on a positive sense of self, teachers must pay careful attention to children's interpretations of themselves as learners. Cynthia Chase-Spilman, a third/fourth grade teacher at Whittier Elementary School in Pasco, Washington, considers trust and self-esteem prerequisites to learning:

> First they have to trust you and lose their fear of failure. Once they get the trust, they learn the excitement of learning, the pride in themselves, the dignity of being self-directed. Once these are in place, then learning skyrockets. You can't do that in the usual school situation. We have this tiny space of time. They are very vulnerable, you have to establish trust. It's the everyday contact with someone they can trust--someone they will be able to say to, "I can't do this." And they think, "The teacher sees my weakness and she still likes me! She'll love me as a teacher, and I must love myself as a student."

More than what districts mandate, more than what teachers teach, it is how children interpret their role as learners that determines what and how they learn. Creating a psychologically safe environment is not a frill to be addressed only after the basics are attended to; for young children, such an environment is essential for learning. "Doing well in school requires a belief that school achievement can be a promising basis of self-esteem, and that belief needs constant reaffirmation even for advantaged students," writes Claude Steele, Professor of Psychology at Stanford University (Steele, 1992).

In order to create a school environment that reduces racial and other vulnerabilities for all children, school faculties must become aware of their often unconsciously held beliefs that some minority and social class groups are less able to succeed academically. While overt racism still exerts a strong influence on our national dialogue about race, lowered expectations may take other forms. Bonnie Pinckney, Director, Family Involvement in Tacoma, Washington, explains:

> For a long time it was the norm for people to think and say, "Oh you poor thing," and justify not asking nor expecting children to do too much. This might be especially true if the child's life circumstances included a parent who had an addiction, if they lived in poverty, or if they didn't have a male role model. This type of overt behavior has been used as an excuse for not expecting the same level of achievement by minority students for decades, and unfortunately still exists today.

When teachers and other school staff convey to children that they don't expect them to be successful, these expectations may become internalized, impairing both attainment and future identification with school. In a study by Graue (1992), a six-year-old boy's words illustrate how teachers' judgments in the early school years may shape a child's self-image in a way that may seriously constrain his or her future ability to learn. When asked what skills are needed to succeed in first grade, the child replied, "Read and be good and sit down and be still. . . . If you don't know how to be good then you'll be a bad boy. . . . Then you'll have to wish that you were good. . . . Nobody will want you if you're a bad kid." Pasco home visitor Carmelita Lopez observes:

> The Unity Project is helping us to see what the needs are. I think the most important thing is not to give up on any of our students. If the teacher gives up, then the principal gives up, the other staff give up, then the student gives up. But maybe if the student is the first one to give up and the rest *don't* give up, there still might be a little light flickering in him saying well, "you know, maybe I could try it, maybe I can do it." But if everybody's light goes out, then naturally the student's light will go out, too.

Is the emphasis on nurturing and caring merely a warm, fuzzy approach to education that conflicts with or replaces a more rigorous curriculum? In *Dumbing Down Our Kids: Why America's Children Feel Good About Themselves but Can't Read, Write, or Add*, Charles J. Sykes (1995) argues that schools are enhancing children's self-esteem but ignoring the basics. However, many researchers have concluded that emotional intelligence is the bedrock upon which to build other intelligences, and that it is more closely linked to lifelong success than is IQ (Goleman, cited in O'Neil, 1996).

Emotions are not usually something that gets in the way of thinking; they are a crucial source of information for learning—they drive attention, create meaning, and have their own memory pathways (Greenspan & Benderly, 1997; Jensen, 1998). In *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*, author Eric Jensen explains why engaging children's emotional response is important for robust learning:

> Emotions engage meaning and predict future learning because they involve our goals, beliefs, biases, and expectancies. . . the systems [for thinking and feeling] are so interconnected that chemicals of emotion are released virtually simultaneously with cognition (p. 93).

The stronger the emotion connected with an experience, the stronger the memory of the experience. Intense emotions trigger the release of the chemicals adraniline, norepinephrine, and vasopressin. They signal the brain, "This is important—keep this"(Jensen, 1998). But emotions can also inhibit the thinking process. Under conditions of high stress, the brain goes into "survival mode;" higher-order thinking is impeded. Although in many schools, there are few opportunities to talk about feelings and concerns, children's ability to learn is often jeopardized by the neglect of their emotional well-being.

Citing the success of Dr. James Comer in transforming schools primarily serving poor children of color, Claude Steele, Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, says: "Comer's genius is to have recognized the importance of students' vulnerabilities as barriers to intellectual development, and the corollary that schools hoping to educate such students must learn first how to make them feel valued" (1992, p. 12).

### Opportunities for Meaningful Participation

A major goal of effective teaching is to make learning meaningful for individual children. In order to make sense of their experience, children must see the connections between what they already know and what they experience in school and other settings. For example, a child who has had little experience with storybooks but who loves to tell stories and engage in dramatic

play can be encouraged to act out a story that is read aloud. Through dramatic play and other language activities, such as songs and storytelling, children can transition to the written word, using skills and interests that they already have.

By providing multiple avenues for children to be successful, staff at Whittier Elementary School (see more detailed description of Whittier at the end of this chapter) has found that the children "have blossomed." An Indian Education Coordinator at a Northwest school district concurs:

> I think that a large problem is that we don't teach to more of the learning styles of our students. We need to look at more hands-on kinds of programs. We need to have more culturally relevant curriculum in our classrooms, so that when children and families come into the classroom, they can recognize themselves in the whole educational process. I think that we need to have teachers that are culturally sensitive and that are willing to be a part of the community that they are teaching in.

Good teachers have always built on children's understandings, seeking to understand learning from the child's point of view. A teacher in a Northwest multiage classroom advises, "Listen to children's thinking. Use their words and work as a window to see their processing and perspectives" (Novick, 1996). In this approach, children, rather than passively receiving knowledge and information from adults, are encouraged to be active participants in authentic learning experiences. According to Newmann and Wehlage (1995), a learning situation is authentic if students:

- Engage in higher order thinking
- Develop a deep understanding of subject matter
- Participate in classroom discourse to build shared understanding
- Can relate their knowledge to public issues or personal experience

These researchers concluded that authentic pedagogy boosted student achievement equitably for students of all social backgrounds. In an educational approach based on authentic pedagogy, both adults and more competent peers play important roles in children's learning: an active child and an active social environment collaborate to produce developmental change (Vygotsky, 1978). Glennellen Pace (1993) describes the role of the teacher in a classroom based on social-authentic pedagogy:

> This is not a *laissez-faire* approach. As the teacher, you are a central player, not someone who "sits out," afraid of "getting in the way of" students' knowledge construction. But neither is this approach teacher centered, where your meanings are the meanings students must "get." Instead, you play multiple roles: demonstrator, mediator, keen observer, and listener (p. 4).

Creating a state of disequilibrium in a child's understanding through posing questions and problems, followed by discussion, is a strategy used frequently in classrooms where higher-order thinking is valued. The role of educators, then, is not just to "give children the "right" answers; instead, teachers facilitate understanding by encouraging dialogue and negotiation of meaning in a context of joint inquiry. Three Northwest teachers describe their approach to teaching math in their blended first-and-second-grade classrooms:

> As teachers, we look for challenging problems that will land our students on the edge of a cliff. We must help them find the motivation and courage to take the leap across the chasm. Not every learner needs the same distance to cross. If the gap is too wide, a child will falter and lose confidence. If too narrow, the child won't stretch, and instead just follow a prescribed course. Students must take this leap of understanding, over and over again. When the confusion is resolved, a bridge has been built across the chasm, bringing power and flexibility of thinking (Briggs, Folkers, & Johnson, 1996, p. 36).

Brain research has helped us to understand why frequent new learning experiences and challenges are critical to brain growth. The brain, we now know, is designed as a pattern detector—perceiving relationships and making connections are fundamental to the learning process (Caine & Caine, 1997). Early experiences and interactions do not just create a context for development and learning; they directly affect the way the brain is wired—the connections that are formed between neurons (Shore, 1997). Because the brain is predisposed to search for how things make sense, strong connections are formed when children make meaning from their experiences (Caine & Caine, 1990)."Challenging sensory stimulation has been rightfully compared to a brain 'nutrient,'" writes Jensen (1998, p. 31).

Brain research also helps to explain why it is important for children to be physically active in the classroom. Hancock (1996) explains: "Physical movement juices up the brain, feeding it nutrients in the form of glucose and increasing nerve connections -- all of which make is easier for kids of all ages to learn" (p. 58). Generally, the younger the child the more important it is for active engagement with materials, peers, and teachers, in order for learning to take place.

**Learning centers and project-based learning**. In the preschool and early elementary years, learning centers—art, blocks, manipulatives, sand and water play, dramatic play—provide a place where children can use and develop competencies other than language. These centers can serve as "safe havens" where second-language learners can watch and listen until they are ready to join in (Tabors, 1998).

When children are able to talk while they work, sharing ideas, excitement, and laughter, and when their hands are active, their minds are engaged. A teacher in a third-grade bilingual classroom expresses this viewpoint when she tells her children, "Talking is probably the most important thing we do in here because you learn the most when you can talk while you work" (Moll & Whitmore, 1993, p. 29).

A curriculum that emphasizes projects and joint inquiry can help all children feel comfortable in the school setting. When children of different backgrounds have opportunities to work together on a project, each child has an opportunity to contribute.

In *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) describes several teachers who respect their students' backgrounds and experiences and recognize the validity of their perceptions and feelings. She describes a classroom in which all members, especially the teacher, look for ways to be successful—"That's why I do so many projects. . . I figure if we do enough different kinds of things we'll hit on the kinds of things that kids can be successful with" (Ladson-Billings).

To enhance children's ability to make sense of their world, projects should be relevant to their lives outside the classroom, drawing on children's knowledge, interests, and experience. Projects that involve exploring the local community can help children understand the region they live in and can serve as the basis for integrating skills in math, science, art, history, and language arts (Rowe & Probst, 1995).

An Indian Education Coordinator stressed the need for teachers to step outside the "industrial learning model" and provide more hands-on and culturally relevant learning experiences:

> I think that the language, the local language should be a part of the curriculum of the district. There are ways to build some of the history and the culture into classroom activities and the classroom curriculum. In science and the environmental sciences you could be talking about fishing, and waters, and all of those kinds of things that are part of our community, so that children can relate to what they're talking about.

For older students, hands-on projects can ease the transition from school to work. A recent high school graduate expressed gratitude for his metal technology teacher, who "was very strict because he was trying to get us ready for the real world," by providing opportunities for students to learn many practical, marketable skills:

> He taught us so many things. I had never been on a boat or anything, but yet the class got the whole year to build a jet boat—a $30,000 jet boat. The class and I were kind of afraid to get on it, but I did and it was good. The feeling knowing that, you know, the whole class built it, it was pretty good.
>
> I think that helped me a lot, the things I learned. Not just physically like the welding and things like that, but like mentally, because two weeks after graduation I got a job as a mechanic and everything I learned in that class, that's what I used there—the welding, the torch, everything. I think he gave me confidence too because while I was working as a mechanic, I wasn't afraid to tackle any project or goal—anything that I would tear apart, or build, or anything. I wasn't afraid because building the jet boat experience, that was a huge project, and it really gave me confidence that I could do anything.

## Conclusion

Research on resiliency has shown that schools that establish high expectations for all kids—and give them the support necessary to live up to the expectations—have high rates of academic success (Benard, 1993). In psychologically safe environments that offer stimulating learning

activities and opportunities to form relationships that are personally meaningful, children form a positive self-image as learners, problem solvers, friends, and family members. Schools, Garmezy (1991) points out, have become a vital refuge for a growing number of children, often "serving as a protective shield to help children withstand the multiple vicissitudes that they can expect from a stressful world."

Learning how to recognize and manage emotions, understanding how others think and feel, and developing the ability to form caring relationships are essential competencies for children to grow into adults who are able to "live well, love well, and expect well"(Werner & Smith, 1992). By including families in a caring community of learners, schools foster resiliency for all: children, families, and school staffs.

Following is a description of Whittier Elementary School in Pasco, Washington. A schoolwide Title I school, Whittier uses an enrichment model to reduce risk and build on the strengths and talents of students and faculty alike.

## Whittier Elementary: Highlight My Strengths

> *The challenge and the promise of personal fulfillment, not remediation (under whatever guise), should guide the education of [culturally diverse] students. Remediation defeats, challenge strengthens—affirming their potential, crediting them with their achievements*, inspiring them. (Steele, 1992)

At Whittier Elementary in Pasco, Washington, teachers understand both the strengths and the struggles of their economically disadvantaged and culturally diverse students. They knew the challenges they would be facing when last year they made a personal choice to teach at the brand-new elementary school in the rural town of Pasco. Two-thirds of Whittier's teachers are Spanish/English bilingual and some have children in the school. Many have had the same experiences that most of their families face—poverty and hard work—often in the fields or shift work in the food processing plants. And everyone is excited that for the first time in 30 years, they have a school on the east side of town: "A walking school," as Principal Jackie Ramirez describes it, "where our teachers are part of the community, part of kids' lives every day."

A large number of their children are from migrant farmworker families, moving from school to school and from town to town as the crops ripen. But, over the years, migrant families have settled in Pasco. Since 1980, when there were only 25 Mexican American children, Pasco has become a predominantly Mexican American community. "We have a very large stable Mexican American community now," says the district's bilingual specialist, Liz Flynn. "A large migrant population came to pick asparagus, apples, potatoes, cherries. Now there are food-processing plants. Many migrant families settled, and they have increasingly entered mainstream professions, often in the growing number of schools in the area."

With the affordability of manufactured homes, there are a lot of first-time home buyers. "But many are families with two incomes, just trying to make it," says Ramirez. "When you have six people to support on $12,000 a year, your resources and time are limited." Some 98 percent of the students in this schoolwide Title I school receive free or reduced price lunch. Approximately 68 percent of students are learning English as a second language, and over 90 percent of

Whittier's incoming first-graders were well below grade level in reading both this year and last. "Low socioeconomic means less access, fewer opportunities, and experiences," notes Ramirez. "The challenge is not for everyone. What we do is crucial on a daily basis. We cannot have one wasted moment. Teachers are working their hearts out."

Despite the concerted efforts of the faculty to align their curriculum with the Washington Assessment of Essential Learning (WASL), the services of three full time Reading Recovery teachers, and additional tutors (including Washington Reading Corps volunteers) who provide one-on-one instruction, WASL scores have been stubbornly resistant to improvement. In reading, writing, and math, scores have remained in the bottom quartile of the state for the second year in a row. "They are not reading English yet," says literacy coach Sylvia Rivera. "It's a big step backward. They're doing everything in Spanish still. I would like for our state officials to go take the test in another language and see how well they do. It's very emotional for me because they cry a lot—it goes on for a week or two. But we try to encourage them, we tell them, "Do your best."

But Whittier's faculty does not dwell on statistics. Third/fourth-grade teacher Cynthia Chase-Spilman explains both the difficulties of taking the state test in a second language and the advantages of being bilingual:

> Our kids face a huge deficit in taking the test because they are taking it in a second language. Most have had very little experience with written English because, in our bilingual program, the fourth grade is a transition year, when they are just beginning to use written English. Even if they know some English, the advanced vocabulary required by the test is just not there yet.
>
> But by knowing two languages they will have a huge asset. When you look at what they will become as citizens and employees, they are going to come out with dual language abilities to provide for their communities. They have the potential to become top wage earners. They will read and write and think in two languages.

Whittier has based its bilingual program on research that shows that children who have a strong foundation in their home language are able to transfer this competency to a second language. In a longitudinal study involving more than 700,000 students, Thomas and Collier (1997) found strong evidence of the greater effectiveness of two-way and late-exit bilingual education in relation to other program models. They found that *only* two-way developmental bilingual and late-exit program models succeeded in producing English Language Learners (ELL) achievement that reaches parity with that of native-English speakers.

The higher risk of reading problems associated with a lack of proficiency in English upon school entry is widely documented (NAEP, 1994). These difficulties are often compounded by poverty, low levels of parental education, lack of access to preschool programs, and poor schooling. Many immigrants from Latin America have limited formal education because only a fraction of the population of these countries has access to K-12 education (National Task Force on Minority High Achievement, 1999).

### Using an Enrichment Model: "What Can We Do Differently?"

It is precisely because of these risks that Whittier's faculty has chosen to use an enrichment model, rather than a remedial model that focuses on low-level skills, for its school reform effort. Ramirez observes:

> The enrichment model makes them look at life differently, see problems differently, and interact with the community in a different way. We look at where kids are, what we have to offer, and what they need to provide to be successful—Boy and Girl Scouts, field trips, music, art, dance, auto mechanics. They learn different languages, different ways to express themselves.

As a Unity Project school, Whittier faculty has taken advantage of the technical assistance offered by OSPI staff in procuring funding. They credit this help with their successful application to the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Project for funding for the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM). This model, developed by Joseph Renzulli, is based on the premise that true equity is not the product of identical learning experiences for all students, but rather the product of a broad range of differentiated learning experiences that take into account each student's abilities, interests, and learning styles. By the end of three years, all of Whittier's faculty will be trained in the model.

The faculty is excited about an approach to teaching and learning that builds on the strengths of everyone: children, families, and all staff. Third/fourth grade teacher Cynthia Chase-Spilman says the decision was simple: "We knew that if we continued to do what a typical school does, we would continue to get what we had been getting, which was failure for the children, so we had to think, 'what can we do different?'"

Before coming to Whittier, Chase-Spilman taught at another innovative elementary school where they helped prepare children for Sheltered English classes by providing opportunities to explore the city through field trips. Every Wednesday they went to the library, to a pet shop, a flower shop, or other local site, returning to school to discuss their experience and sometimes to write about it. "We spent the whole day just learning about the world," says Chase-Spilman. (See sidebar for a letter of appreciation from one student). In the fifth-grade sheltered English classes, teachers use lots of cues, visual aids, cooperative groups, and bilingual assistants. "It's a very low risk environment for children so children start to get comfortable. And we do speak some Spanish," says Rivera.

Faculty agreed that establishing a climate of trust and caring was essential for learning to take place. "First they have to trust you and lose their fear of failure," Chase-Spilman says. "Once they get the trust, they learn the excitement of learning, the pride in themselves, the dignity of being self-directed. Once these are in place, then learning skyrockets."

Enhancing the curriculum, as well as motivation for self-directed learning, are the weekly Enrichment Clusters. Clusters are composed of multiage groups of students who pursue common interests. Three days a week, about 200 children stay after school for tutoring and enrichment activities. A majority of the staff engages in the instruction of these after-school enrichment/extension opportunities.

Enrichment facilitator Debra Bracks-Jones has adopted the SEM Interest Inventory Survey to identify and collect student and teacher "special interests, strong points, and passions."

**Greater Pasco Area Chamber of Commerce**
Teacher Appreciation Week – Essay Contest Winner
Honoring
**Cynthia Chase-Spilman**
**Fifth Grade Teacher – Livingston Elementary – Pasco School District #1**

Hello, I'm Tony Jimenez and I'd like to tell the Pasco Chamber of Commerce about a special teacher in my life. My special teacher <u>really</u> is a special teacher because she is two teachers in one. I want to tell you about my Prep SET 5th grade teachers... Mrs. Alice Rodriguez and Mrs. Cynthia Chase-Spilman. They are a team. They are always together! Everyday I think of them as just one fantastic person! *They have influenced my life so much that I can't believe it!*

At the beginning of this year my teachers knew that I was low in all my grades. But they told me that no matter what I did, they would always like me and always help me. I like that promise! They told me I was not going to be just good. I was going to be great. I was going to be smart. I wanted to believe that, and I did!

I learned to organize my school supplies. I put them in a tub or on a shelf just like I'll put them in a locker in middle school. When all my stuff is neat I think I do my work faster. Faster is better!

Sometimes I used to be silly in school because I was confused. I learned my lesson about being respectful and polite. When I'm confused I usually don't act silly anymore. My teachers taught me to be polite to myself. So now I have learned more. I'm happier.

On Wednesdays my class goes on field trips all over town. We've been taking trips to know about different kinds of jobs. On one trip to the Pasco City Hall I got to be the mayor pro-tem of Pasco for awhile. I felt full of joy! So I know my teachers have influenced my life because I want to grow up to have an interesting job. Maybe, if I want to, I'll be mayor of Pasco in some years.

I'll always have my two teachers in my heart. So I know that they will <u>always</u> influence me!

**Tony Jimenez**
5th Grade Prep SET
Ruth Livingston
Elementary
May 6, 1996

In addition, the after-school program includes volunteers from the community, who offer services. Students' interests are matched with adults who offer their expertise in music, dance, auto mechanics, arts and crafts, basketball, sewing, chess, cooking. "Jackie Ramirez, the principal, is very open. If I have a love of dancing and want to teach dance, then I teach it," says Rivera. Recently the school purchased 20 guitars. These guitars are the first instruments that the students have attempted to play. Students not only learned to play, but some students also performed, along with fellow students who learned Mexican folk dancing, in a downtown festival. These added experiences don't compete with reading and math; they offer opportunities for success through multiple pathways. Rivera explains:

> If a kid needs help in reading, but wants to learn to play guitar, we give him both. We look at the whole child and give him other avenues of involvement with learning. A child might need a lot more than reading at any point. All of our special education kids need enrichment. They often have individual tutoring much of the day. Now they have opportunities to explore other avenues; they have really blossomed. It's worth it for them to stay in school because they see a lot of avenues they can take.

As the enrichment facilitator, Bracks-Jones provides workshops and coaching for teachers in the schoolwide enrichment model (SEM), as well as in the techniques needed to prepare students for the WASL. She has found that because both the SEM and the WASL support the development of higher order thinking skills, and because the enrichment clusters are aligned with the Washington performance tasks, "it all fits together; they complement each other—the enrichment model and the Washington learning goals." She continues:

> Students need to be able to do more than regurgitate information. They need to be able to apply and use it in novel situations—to apply it to their lives, to improve their lives. It will help them in high school and in college with higher-order thinking, reading, and writing. It will help them as workers, as citizens, and as family members. During the enrichment clusters, we bring in all our talents; we engage in projects with students. We engage in action research projects—graphing, data collection, questioning strategies.
>
> Last year, during the weekly May sessions, we focused on persuasive writing. In one group of bilingual children in kindergarten through grade five, helium balloons with messages designed to persuade the person who found the balloon to write back, were sent aloft! We received messages from as far away as Idaho. The kids were amazed!

### A Comprehensive Literacy Program

With the understanding that comprehension is the goal of reading, Whittier has developed a comprehensive literacy program. In addition to six teachers who are trained in Reading Recovery, the faculty has participated in training by New Zealand literacy expert Margaret Mooney. Maria Harmon Montania, from California, has provided expertise on effective bilingual education and discourse patterns. These workshops have helped teachers to understand how children's speech patterns influence their thinking. The goal is not to eliminate the tendency of Hispanic children to speak in a nonlinear style; rather, teachers help children become aware of expectations of mainstream culture—especially on standardized tests—to think in linear terms of cause and effect.

A literacy library with leveled books assures that all children have books to read at their instructional level. In addition to Reading Recovery (an early intervention in literacy for first-grade students) and one-on-one tutoring provided by volunteers, teachers work daily with small groups of children in guided reading groups to ensure that children better comprehend what they are reading. According to Mooney, guided reading allows teachers to talk, think, and read through a text with children, offering questions, comments, and prompts to the children to stimulate their interest and understanding. "Your role is one of support: ensuring that the children read *with* comprehension," explains Mooney (1997, p. 153).

For 30 minutes each day, older children choose a book from the classroom library or the well-stocked school library for sustained silent reading (SSR). Literature circles, in which study groups read a book together, a little at a time, stopping along the way to discuss what's happening, provide opportunities for older children to discuss literature, sharing ideas and confusions. Literacy expert Regie Routman describes literature circles as "the best way I know to get students excited about literature and talking on a deep and personal level" (2000, p. 171).

In order to ensure that children are making progress in both decoding and comprehension, the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) is administered quarterly to each student who is reading within the diagnosed reading ranges of pre-primer to fourth grade. Both comprehension and decoding are assessed through running records and having children retell stories. "We ask, 'what kinds of interventions do we need?'" says Ramirez. "We keep a DRA workbook and examine assessment results for patterns. We look at data and go from there. We use our professional judgment."

In the bilingual program, the amount of instruction in English is gradually increased, as children become more proficient. By the second grade, if a child has been in the program since kindergarten, 30 percent of the instruction is in English. By the fifth grade, 80 percent of instruction is in English. In addition, all bilingual children engage in oral language activities in English for 45 minutes each day. Special classes, such as art, physical education, and music, are typically taught in English. The goal is to have students speak predominantly English in classes by the time they leave fifth grade. Of course, monolingual Spanish-speaking children from Mexico arrive in Pasco at all age levels, so this goal is not always realized. Rivera explains Whittier's philosophy:

> It's not our goal to keep them in Spanish-only classes forever. Our purpose is to give them enough instruction in their own language--give them a strong foundation in reading and writing, and then they can transfer it to English. We incorporate English as much as possible from kindergarten on. Even in bilingual classrooms, we don't speak Spanish all day long. We use English as much as possible in oral language, then in reading, and finally in writing.

### Supporting Teachers and Families

High expectations for children, teachers, and families can become overwhelming without the resources and support to reach them. As a former teacher, Ramirez is aware of how easy it is for teachers to get discouraged, and in turn, pass the discouragement on to children and families:

> We are all focused here on helping all teachers do the best job they can to meet the kids' needs. Teachers are reaching the frustration point. They need to verbalize their frustrations, and we help them come back to reality. I try to remember what I needed as a classroom teacher. We have to be careful not to put on teachers more than they can handle. Teachers need to realize what teaching is and how important it is; not all children will be reading at grade level, but all children will demonstrate growth.

> We do need to do the best we can do; we need to tap resources. We have to be able to say at the end of the year, "I did what I could for the children 180 days, every day." And it's not over and done with at the end of the year, there's always next year. Growth is happening. When we realized that we needed more services, I hired four more classified faculty. The classroom teacher can't do it all by him or herself.

A team approach to professional development encourages shared responsibility for children's learning, and a weekly early release provides opportunities for sharing expertise with each other, including questions, concerns, and information from workshops. The third/fourth grade teachers work as a team with small groups of children, placed by skill level. By concentrating on their special interests and expertise in reading, math, and writing clusters of one hour and 40 minutes, "the instruction is very intense and direct," Chase-Spilman says. "Because we specialize in one area, our preparations are very detailed and we are very focused." She adds:

> When you are teaching five to seven levels you don't have the time to individualize instruction, usually no more than five minutes a day for each child. Now we can teach very intentionally toward our goals. But movement among the groups is very flexible. We are constantly evaluating kids so that no child stagnates in one group. We meet as a team to discuss each child. By working in teams, everyone's expertise comes out. We learn to trust each other. We can say, "here are my weaknesses and here are my strengths."

Helping families understand their vital role in their children's education is at the center of Whittier's literacy program. Ramirez's philosophy of family involvement is deceptively simple: deliver and communicate on parents' terms. A strong and growing PTA helps organize family game nights, an annual Cinco de Mayo dinner, and informational meetings where families can learn about the WASL, math, and literacy.

Elsa Aranda, full time home visitor, helps all staff understand how to work more effectively with families. "By going into homes, having families be a part of what we are about, we become aware of their strengths and needs," says Ramirez. "Effective communication between home and school is crucial. We learn from every aspect." Aranda's role encompasses "a little bit of everything." She interviews all families to see what services they might need—housing, food stamps, medical coupons, information on parenting—"any needs that parents might bring to my attention."

Helping families become aware of what they can do to support their children's learning is a big part of her job. Each new family gets a welcome letter from the child's teacher. On home visits, Aranda brings each family a packet with educational information and discusses the information with them—how to read to children, how to teach them at home, why attendance is important. "A lot of what we need to do is educate our families to use what resources they have," Ramirez says. "They don't have to have a lot of expensive materials. They can use what they have at home—sing songs, tell stories. Parents need to be aware of what they can do with their children, birth to five. We try to educate and include parents."

Because the faculty is aware of the value of early intervention, Whittier's faculty also works with community Head Start programs, sharing professional development opportunities and celebrations. Head Start teachers observe in kindergarten classrooms and use the library and computer lab. "They will be our kids," explains Ramirez. Kindergarten packets—complete with cassettes with children's songs, tape player, markers, magnetic letters to spell the child's name, crayons, pencils, a flip chart of colors and shapes, and predictable books—are brought to the homes of every incoming kindergartner by the home visitor, literacy coach or teaching assistant. In addition, all three-year-olds in the community are identified and every quarter, families are invited to the gym for a celebration, and they take the packets home. Aranda observes:

> Families are very eager to take in all this information and help their kids learn. In Pasco, we try to address everything we've ever heard of to help kids succeed—housing, medical and nutritional needs, helping find a clean, quiet place for kids to study. That's hard when two to three families share a trailer or a two-bedroom apartment. When it's very basic survival, it's hard. They work so hard just for food and rent--they will take care of that before they will buy a book. And kids need a lot of help to understand books that are taking them to places they never knew existed.

The difficulties are compounded by the scarcity of books in Spanish available in the community. Despite the high percentage of Pasco's population that is Hispanic, the local library has only two small shelves of books in Spanish. "And you can go in a grocery store and pick up a book in English," notes Rivera. "But you can't find a book in Spanish that easily." The school library tries to fill the gap by keeping hours from 8 a.m. until late evening for parents and children to check out books. "Our library is used and used," Rivera says, "and our computer lab is open to families also."

Despite the difficulties and frustrations of their jobs, Whittier's teachers do not regret their decision to teach at Whittier. Rivera's comments are typical of how teachers view their role in the lives of children:

> We knew the community, the children we would be teaching; we knew that we would work really, really hard. I became a teacher because with all the injustices I have experienced in my own schooling, I knew I could teach better than that. There are some very passionate people here. Many of us have had the experiences that our children face. They are children first. We do the best we can with all our children. That's what we're here for.

## Conclusion

Whittier's approach to learning and teaching is based on a firm belief that commitment and learning thrive in an environment that fosters resiliency for all. This belief guides the educational practices and school characteristics summarized below:

- **Whittier is a community school:** Both teachers and children live in the community; children walk to school. Two-thirds of Whittier's teachers are Spanish/English bilingual; some have children in the school, and many have had the same experiences that most of their families face. "Our teachers are part of kids' lives every day. We live in the community," notes Ramirez.
- **Use of an enrichment model:** All faculty encourage higher-order thinking skills, multiple intelligences, and avenues for success in school, building on the strengths and interests of everyone—children, teachers, families, and community members. By offering opportunities for success through multiple pathways, "children have really blossomed," literacy coach Sylvia Rivera says.
- **Shared responsibility:** Principal Ramirez focuses on supporting teachers, while holding high expectations for them. Teachers (including home visitors, literacy coaches, enrichment facilitators, and teaching assistants), in turn, have high expectations for children's achievement and behavior, and work to provide the needed support and resources to children and families. A team approach to professional development and teaching helps assure that everyone takes responsibility without feeling overwhelmed.
- **Partnerships with families:** Faculty work together to identify and address the needs of families. In part, because many teachers have experienced the same challenges and experiences that their families face, they are able to identify strengths and help families see themselves as resources for their children. A focus on early intervention helps ensure that children's early experiences prepare them for school. "These will be our kids," reminds Ramirez.
- **Balanced literacy program:** A well-stocked library, the use of guided reading, sustained silent reading, and literature circles provide opportunities for children to read for enjoyment and comprehension. Reading Recovery teachers, volunteer tutors, frequent individual assessment, and small-group instruction increase opportunities for individualized teaching. By focusing on the philosophy of WASL, rather than the test scores themselves, teachers see the encouragement of higher-order thinking skills as a way to improve children's lives. "It will help them as citizens, workers, and family members," notes enrichment facilitator Debra Bracks-Jones.
- **Late-exit bilingual program:** By viewing the ability to speak Spanish as an asset rather than a problem, teachers understand the value of helping children build a strong foundation in their home language, while they learn English. Teacher Cynthia Chase-Spilman sums it up when she says, "By knowing two languages, they will have a huge asset. They will read and write and think in two languages."
- **Creative allocation of resources:** As a Unity Project school, Whittier has taken advantage of the expertise offered by OSPI liaisons to procure funding for after school programs, professional development, and to meet other identified needs. In addition, by utilizing the talents and expertise of faculty, families, and community members, children have increased opportunities for learning.

# Chapter III

## Professional Development Through Collaborative Inquiry

At a team meeting, teachers in a small rural elementary school are discussing the recently released WASL scores of their culturally diverse and economically disadvantaged students:

Sonja: *We are trying to build a strong foundation with our kids. We want to align our teaching, not just with the WASL. We do have to put value on it, but we should be teaching to the philosophy of the WASL, not to the test itself. If we are going to address the higher-order comprehension skills that it tests—making inferences, predictions, interpretations—we have to understand how to use questions to increase comprehension. But there is finger pointing--"the fourth grade should do it." Our self-confidence has been shaken. I feel like everything is wrong--not good enough.*

Michelle: *We need time to talk and dialogue—to value this dialogue, to evolve as teachers, to understand what we're holding accountable. What is the bigger picture? What is the purpose? We need to validate what kids are able to do. We're always asking more--just like we do of teachers. We need more time to plan for kids. Then we need time to get together and do it. Action should be tied to theory, but reflection is not there for us now.*

Sylvia: *Things are piled on with no time to process. I think it's cruel what we do to teachers. Someone develops something—as assessment, a reading strategy—and just gives it to us. It becomes just one more thing. We never have a team discussion on what we have when it's given to us. When we don't know the purpose, we don't use it. We don't understand the thinking, the philosophy that went into developing it. We don't learn how to use it. We need more discussion on what we are doing, and why.*

Sonja: *It's a disco light--everyone is doing their own thing. We need to focus, to channel the energy. Our assistants and specialists are not included in anything. Even with our volunteers, the missing piece is time for communication with teachers. There is no time to do it. It becomes one more thing.*

Maria: *We can't trust ourselves. We need to stop everything. We need to talk about everything that is working, rather than take everything we learn and throw it out. We want our kids to be lifelong learners in a safe environment. It's a gift we can give—to help kids become literate, thinkers, problem solvers. Then they can succeed in life. But we're scared to death we'll be wrong.*

Sylvia: *There is frustration--we are asked to teach critically, but we don't think critically ourselves.*

The current emphasis on high academic standards has had a number of positive effects on our thinking about educational practices. At their best, state standards and the assessments that monitor progress for children in third grade and above emphasize comprehension and critical thinking skills. Second, there is an emphasis on *all* children. Schools are now expected to educate all children to levels of literacy that previously were expected of relatively few. All children are required to be able to reason verbally, to follow a complex plot or argument, to analyze, to make inferences, to comprehend, and to write increasingly complex texts. Higher-order thinking skills have become the new buzz words.

As a result, these assessments have served as an "equity" check by highlighting the still large educational achievement gaps among the nation's racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups (Elaine Meeks, personal communication, April 28, 2000). Yet, as the above teachers' conversation illustrates, when a climate of accountability becomes a climate of fear, our most vulnerable children are often the first to suffer. Teachers who are "scared to death they'll be wrong" may find it difficult to engage in stimulating learning experiences with children and families. Understandably, teachers often become frustrated when their efforts are not successful, particularly when their efforts are judged primarily on increasing test scores. "If only we had different kids." "If only the parents would. . ." are comments often heard in teachers' lounges across America.

According to Professor Carol Ann Tomlinson (2000), " Standards-based instruction and the high-stakes testing that drives it can often feel like a locomotive rolling over everything in its path, including individualized learning" (2000, p. 1). "Our first obligation," she continues, "is to ensure that standards-based teaching practice does not conflict with best teaching practice. Once those are aligned, differentiation—or attention to the diverse needs of learners —follows naturally" (p. 4).

Aligning standards with best practices is a necessarily slow and intellectually demanding process. But because teaching is defined as time on task in a classroom setting, time for teachers to read, discuss, reflect, to think critically, to make careful decisions about curriculum, and to form partnerships with families and the community are considered luxuries in most of America's schools. Helen Malagon, Supervisor of Washington's Transitional Bilingual Program observes:

> Right now teachers are over-burdened. The focus is getting as many students as possible to meet standards. In reality, most educators want to do a good job, however, time is a major constrain. There is little time to plan and prepare, then factor in time to acquire or develop essential skills that better prepare them for the diversity in the student population. For example, there is a major emphasis on math and reading, yet professional development that addresses instruction for second language learners in reading and math is most often not infused into the general training for reading and math. Therefore, it becomes a separate training strand and many teachers fail to access training that will benefit this student population. We need to integrate and make it workable for teachers.

Most teachers we interviewed spoke positively about the value of "teaching to the philosophy of the WASL," and the need to encourage the higher-order thinking skills that the state assessment evaluates. However, in Washington, as elsewhere, the lack of ongoing opportunities to participate in professional development activities that encourage reflection and problem solving often limits teachers' ability to prepare students for the "literacy of thoughtfulness" that is required of today's students (Strickland, 1990).

And because schools are often expected to create "quick fixes" to complex problems, the demands made on teachers to prepare the citizen and employee for the 21st century are sometimes contradictory. Teaching for understanding may be merely added on to a curriculum designed to meet positivist assumptions of objectivity and efficiency. Thus, teachers are often exhorted to:

- Emphasize multiple intelligences *and* increase standardized test scores
- Facilitate higher-order thinking *and* memorization of discrete facts
- Nurture individual development and cultural diversity *and* get everyone to the same destination at the same time
- Create schools which are exciting, lively places that engender enthusiasm for learning *and* maintain orderly classrooms in which all students are quietly "on task"

Of course, good teachers must, on a daily basis, balance these seemingly dichotomous expectations and often they must do so in a context of increasing need and diminishing resources. Ironically, as schools are increasingly becoming key players in reducing violence and criminal behavior, nurturing resilience, and providing a safe haven for at-risk youngsters, many states have seen their educational and human resources budgets remain the same or even shrink.

## Supporting Professional Development: What Works? What Doesn't?

> *If visions of reform hold any prospect of influencing American schools, new learning will need to occur at multiple levels. Policymakers will have to learn, as well as children; teachers, as well as parents. Administrators, curriculum developers, school board members—everyone will have to learn.*(Wilson, Peterson, Ball, & Cohen, 1996, p. 469)

Researchers have consistently found that adults, like children, need to become actively involved in their own learning process. As early as 1957, the National Society for the Study of Education recommended that schools and entire staffs become collaborators in providing inservice education. Yet, as the above conversation illustrates, teachers often have few opportunities to engage in these activities. In a recent issue of *Education Week*, Hampel states, "Sustained faculty conversation about important educational issues is as rare as it is crucial in most American schools. Doing takes precedence over talking, and isolation is more common than collegiality" (1999).

Ever since the authors of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) warned that a rising tide of mediocrity in our educational system was compromising our nation's ability to be competitive in the world economy, education reform or restructuring has been proposed, not only to improve schooling, but as the solution to our nation's ills. Yet there is considerable agreement that these sometimes conflicting waves of reform have produced disappointing results (Clark & Astuto, 1994; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

The 1988 Annual Report of the Carnegie Endowment for the Advancement of Teaching reported that morale within the teaching profession had substantially declined since the publication of *A Nation at Risk;* that in fact, teachers were "demoralized and largely unimpressed" by the reform actions taken in the previous five years. Since that time, the tension between old and new waves of reform and the "policy collisions" between them (Darling-Hammond, 1990) have, in Darling-Hammond's words, sometimes "created an Alice in Wonderland world in which people ultimately begin to nod blithely at the inevitability of incompatible events" (p. 344).

According to Michael Fullan, Dean of Education at the University of Toronto, "the greatest problem faced by school districts and schools is not resistance to change, but the fragmentation, overload, and incoherence resulting from the uncritical acceptance of too many different innovations" (1991, p. 197). In such a climate of confusion and contradiction, and with little input into the reform process, it is not surprising that some teachers have seriously considered closing the classroom door and waiting for it all to go away. The absence of a revamped professional development system "is the Achilles heel of the best-designed systemic reform efforts," says Stanford University Education Professor Michael Kirst (cited in O'Neil, 1993).

The last few years, however, have brought increasing recognition that teachers and teachers' knowledge gained from and embedded in their everyday work with children should be at the center of reform efforts and professional development activities (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Lieberman, 1995). Elliot Eisner, Professor of Education and Art at Stanford University, notes:

> One of the most important developments [of the last 10 years] is the enormously increased appreciation for practical knowledge. It is not that theory is not useful, but only that theory by its nature deals with the general and the more or less uniform. It will always be limited in its relevance to the conduct of action in the particular circumstances in which action is inevitably conducted (cited in Bracey, 1994, p. 568).

The increased appreciation for practical knowledge enriched by critical reflection has produced a rich body of literature that supports teachers' need to become actively involved in their own learning process. "Teachers learn best by studying, doing and reflecting; by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students' and their work; and by sharing what they see," says Linda Darling-Hammond, Professor of Education at Stanford University. These understandings are reflected in the U.S. Department of Education's set of principles of professional development, published by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1997). The principles promote inclusive learning communities for everyone who impacts students and their learning.

**Principles of High-Quality Professional Development from the U.S. Department of Education**

High-quality professional development:

1. Focuses on teachers as central to student learning, yet includes all other members of the school community
2. Focuses on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement
3. Respects and nurtures the intellectual and leadership capacity of teachers, principals, and others in the school community
4. Reflects best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership
5. Enables teachers to develop further experience in subject content, teaching strategies, uses of technologies, and other essential elements in teaching to high standards
6. Promotes continuous inquiry and improvement embedded in the daily life of schools
7. Is planned collaboratively by those who will participate in and facilitate that development
8. Requires substantial time and other resources
9. Is driven by a coherent long-term plan
10. Is evaluated ultimately on its impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning; and this assessment guides subsequent professional development efforts

If school reformers are to avoid the disco dance described by Sylvia in the teachers' conversation above, and the Alice in Wonderland world described by Darling-Hammond (1990), professional development activities will need to help teachers balance the inevitable tensions that result from increased and sometimes conflicting expectations:

- Getting children ready for next year and helping children reach their development potential
- Preparing children to live successfully both in their own culture and in the dominant culture
- Addressing the challenges of equity and excellence in a context of growing economic inequality

Little (1997) suggests that the "test of effective professional development is whether teachers and other educators come to know more about their subjects, their students, and their practice, and to make informed use of what they know." In schools designed as learning communities, all members work collaboratively to improve the learning process for both students and adults. The learning environment supports shared responsibility and leadership, risk taking, collaboration, joint inquiry, and self-awareness.

Newmann and Wehlage (1995) describe three general features of a professional community:

- Teachers pursue a clear shared purpose for all students' learning
- Teachers engage in collaborative activity to achieve the purpose
- Teachers take collective responsibility for student learning

Issues of social justice and equity are at the center of this vision of school reform and professional development. Collaboration with children, colleagues, and families plays a key role in inquiry-based staff development. Learning to work more effectively and respectfully with families, particularly with families from non-Anglo cultures, is a critical element of professional development. Home visitor Carmelita Lopez observes:

> One of the barriers to partnerships with families is not giving families the respect right up front when they first come into any building. Because our jobs are very, very busy, we sometimes can seem unwelcoming. But if we don't give them that time, that respect, those kinds of things will create barriers. Instead, we need to have the attitude that we are just waiting for them and we're ready and willing to help them, to listen to them, to value their opinions, then that breaks away any barriers.

Including families in discussions about school change and recognizing families as resources helps to build an inclusive learning community that nurtures diverse perspectives. Many of the families we interviewed stressed the need for teachers to have a better understanding of children's challenging behaviors. Learning to listen to and respect children, "finding out where they are coming from," and good communication with parents were considered critical skills for all educators. A mother of two elementary school children advised:

> Communication, interviewing—both parents and children—are very important. You have to try; a child may react in one way, but you have to think about why is that child reacting in that certain way and not be prejudiced because they upset you because of the way that they acted. You have to go one step deeper for that. So I think that they really need those types of professional development skills, you know, to try to make it more like a home environment.

> It needs to go beyond training. Training needs to be attended to get information. But beyond that, there needs to be continual discussion and dialogue—administrators to administrators, principals among principals, and then principals among teachers, and teachers among teachers. This must be a continual conversation, a discussion of the differences in how do I teach reading and writing and math, and take into consideration the experiences of those in our population that don't necessarily like macaroni and cheese, that don't necessarily like sloppy Joes, or white bread.

Malagon, who believes that parents are a much underutilized resource, is a staunch advocate for including parents' voices at all levels of decisionmaking:

> Parents are the key. When they have an understanding of the school system and we have validated them as valuable contributors to the system, they can provide us with knowledge, guidance and resources. Then, they can hold us, their communities and themselves accountable for what needs to be done to improve our schools and communities. I tell parents "these are not my children they are yours. Together, we need to make sure that they are provided with the resources they need. It is time that you open your personal library and share those resources.

> Education *does* have to be a partnership between communities, schools and students, and families. I focus so much on parents because it is *their* children we are educating. Until under-represented populations have a voice in policies, whether at the school and district level, in the communities, or at the state or national level, change will be slow in coming. Parents can add to the richness of the experiences provided to students, we but have to open our door and add them to the list of invaluable contributors to our schools and communities.

Collaborative inquiry can only thrive in a climate of mutual respect and interdependence. Key to the establishment of a community of learners is a principal who encourages teachers to examine teaching and learning, and implement ideas and programs that result from reflective practice (Reitzug & Burrello, 1995). Just as the role of the teacher is changing from dispenser of knowledge *to* children to "co-constructor" of knowledge *with* children, the role of the principal is evolving from that of a manager to the role of facilitator of group inquiry, co-learner, collaborative leader, liaison to the outside world. and orchestrator of decisionmaking (Wohlsletter & Briggs, 1994). Principal Elaine Meeks of Cherry Valley Elementary in Polson, Montana, observes:

> Effective staff development and school reform are not just a matter of changing teaching practices. What we are doing is changing an entire culture. We need to reconceptualize the role of the building principal as an effective change agent, one who leads through example, and helps to create the conditions that support continuous improvement. Sustaining this environment requires constant monitoring of the match between what we say we believe and what we actually do. If we really believe it is the children's school, then we must keep their needs at the center. We can say we believe anything, but what we do had better illuminate what we believe. We have to keep taking it back to our philosophy—keep that out in front of us. This is key.

### Professional Development in Edmonds, Washington

As a step toward improving their own classroom practices, teachers from Edmonds, Washington, teamed up to research different models of professional development. The result—an 82-page research synthesis called "Professional Development: Best Practices"—uses accessible language to outline general concepts as well as generic models that can be adapted to fit individual schools. Not only is the material well researched, but it carries the scent of success: The Edmonds District was the winner of a U.S. Department of Education Model Professional Development Award last year.

The Edmonds educators distill research concepts into practical tips, such as the qualities of a good staff development model and best practices for follow-ups to training. They also highlight the qualities of leadership to support staff development, examine strategies for working with adult learners, and identify factors that motivate or prevent change. The section of the report that focuses on models provides a question-and-answer overview of nine applications, including study groups, mentors, and distance learning. Each section organizes information under such useful headings as, "How do you do it?" Where has it worked?", and "What are the pros and cons?"

Source: Boss, S. (summer 2000). In the library. *Northwest Education*, p. 41.

In such a climate, teachers are viewed and view themselves as professionals, who are able and expected to articulate their own beliefs about teaching and learning, as well as understand the latest theory, research, and current thinking in education. In addition, teachers engage in their own research (often in concert with students and families), creating new knowledge to inform instructional practices, and design authentic learning situations (Carr & Braunger, 1998).

### Supportive Organizational Structures

> *Western culture celebrates the individual. In the education factory, learning is a solo act.* (Raymond Reyes, 1998)

**Study teams.** Organizational structures that reduce isolation are critical to creating an environment that fosters collaborative inquiry and collective responsibility for students (Lieberman, 1995; Meier, 1995; Reitzug & Burrello, 1995). Structures such as study teams increase opportunities for teachers to share ideas, strategies, and students. Teaming leads to a sense of collective responsibility for one another and for students and provides an emotional and instructional support network, key characteristics of a learning community (Reitzug & Burrello).

According to Liz Flynn, Pasco School District's bilingual specialist, many of Washington's teachers have had an abundance of opportunities for staff development through workshops and lectures (key components of high-quality professional development), but there is often little opportunity to integrate new knowledge into their practice, leading to frustration and overload. As Sylvia, in the teachers' conversation above, lamented, when teachers don't understand the thinking and philosophy that went into developing a new curriculum or assessment, then it just becomes "one more thing." Flynn explains:

> Teachers are often not given the chance to stop, to sit down with what they've learned and integrate it into their own knowledge base and apply it in a systematic manner. They need to have time to sit down with their colleagues and say, "I have a child who just isn't learning as much as I know she can. Can you give me some ideas to help motivate her?" Sharing strategies with colleagues usually works better than someone coming in and saying, "You should be doing these things."

Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, and Hurwitz (1999) suggest that the process for enhancing professional conversations should include:

- Routines for reflection and exchange of ideas, resources, and problem solving
- Inquiry processes for exploring classroom issues and data
- A clear set of agreed-upon ground rules for the discussion and individuals prepared to facilitate conversation with these ground rules in mind

**The Curriculum Inquiry Cycle**. In order to help teachers fulfill their new role of curriculum developer as well as curriculum implementer, NWREL staff have developed a process known as the Curriculum Inquiry Cycle. According to authors Maureen Carr and Jane Braunger, "Curriculum inquiry involves teachers in determining the critical experiences necessary to engage students in meeting challenging standards" (1998, p. 8). The recursive process involves examining current practice, making decisions, creating optimal learning environments, and researching classrooms.

> Through the curriculum inquiry cycle teachers can look deeply into their ideas about knowledge, the roles that students and teachers play in the development of knowledge, and the relationship between their conceptions of learning and teaching and the kind of learning that occurs in classrooms (Carr & Braunger, 1998, p. 7).

The ongoing cycle of curriculum renewal is based on the premise that professional development should assist teachers to get in touch with their implicit theories or beliefs about teaching and learning to form coherent, rational theories based on evidence. A major goal of this NWREL project is to assist teachers and schools to create self-sustaining processes for improving curriculum and instruction. It is prompted by key questions central to teaching and learning:

- **Examining Current Practice**

  What does my teaching look like? Why do I work this way?
  What does this tell me about how I think about curriculum?
  Is my current practice making a difference in student learning?

- **Setting Priorities**

  Are my practices consistent with what is known about how people learn? Are content and performance standards reflected in my teaching practice? Am I aware of alternative models of teaching to meet the needs of diverse learners?

- **Creating an Optimal Learning Environment**

  What are the dynamics of an optimal learning environment for all children?
  What learning experiences are essential? What assessments are appropriate?

- **Expanding Teacher Knowledge Through Classroom Research**

  What dilemmas, questions, or concerns about teaching and learning do I want to explore? How can I collaborate more with colleagues and community members?
  How will I share my research?

According to Carr and Braunger (1998), teachers who have worked with the curriculum cycle have been most positive about the dialogue that it encourages with colleagues, dialogue that grows to include other colleagues not engaged in the inquiry process.

# Professional Development Through Action Research

Action research is a cyclical process that involves identifying a general idea or problem, gathering related information, developing an action plan, implementing the plan, evaluating the results, and starting over with a revised idea or problem.

**Assumptions of Action Research**

- Change, to be positive and successful, must have the involvement of and ownership by those expected to carry out the change
- The difference between success and failure of educational reform is closely tied to the degree of involvement of teachers and principals
- Lasting change takes place when change strategies involve educators in experiences in which they anticipate success
- Action research is an effective strategy for engaging educators in the change process

**What is Action Research?**

- Action research takes place when educators initiate and control the research in conjunction with the other day-to-day activities of leading school or classroom
- It is a search for answers to questions relevant to educators' immediate interests, with the primary goal of putting the findings immediately into practice
- It is a cyclical process that involves identifying a general idea or problem, gathering related information, developing an action plan, implementing the plan, evaluating the results, and starting over with a revised idea or problem

**Benefits of Action Research**

- Action research provides an opportunity for teachers and administrators to explore and experiment with different teaching and leadership methods in a positive and constructive manner.
- Researchers studying the benefits of action research are consistent in their findings that educators grow personally and professionally, gain a sense of empowerment, and assume greater responsibility for the future of their learning and teaching. In particular, studies have found that educators:
    - Become more flexible and creative in their thinking and problem-solving (Fine, 1981; Pine, 1987)
    - Increase networking and collegiality (Little, 1981)
    - Increase reading, discussion, thinking, and assessing ideas from related research with expanded analytical skills (Simmons, 1885)

**Conducting Action Research**

Watson and Stevenson (1989) found that the working conditions most supportive of action research provide:

- A forum in which to share findings and frustrations
- Opportunities to educate but not to indoctrinate
- Time to rethink, re-examine, and relive the principles that underlie teaching practices
- Colleagues, and particularly the principal, who are supportive of the action research project

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**Action Research Process**

1. Identify an issue, area of interest, or idea
2. Define the problem or issue related to the area of interest
3. Review related information from journal articles, books, or workshops
4. Identify the questions to be dealt with or the action research project
5. Develop a plan or procedure to answer the question
6. Make recommendations based on the results of the project

The action research process itself may be more important than the project's results. It is one of the best methods of developing a climate that supports educational reform. Action research is a change process that encourages risk taking, provides a safety net for failure, raises the status of the educator from skilled technician to scholar-practitioner, and, most importantly, improves student academic achievement.

Source: McKay, J. (1992). Journal of Staff Development, 13 (1).

**Observation and discussion of teaching practices**. Visiting other classrooms, with opportunities for follow-up discussion with colleagues and support from peer mentors, can also provide a catalyst for change. Says Vancouver School District cultural specialist DaVerne Bell:

> I have a strong belief that one of the best ways to learn is from your peers. I could be the talking head administrator and tell you this is how you should do it. And a teacher might say, "Well, you are not in the classroom and you're not dealing with these 30 kids every day. You have no idea." But to hear from one of your peers who is going through the same things you are, and they are being effective, that kind of network is tremendous.

At Helen Baller Elementary School in Camas, Washington, Principal Pat Edwards and a number of teachers visited New Zealand for an intensive study of their literacy program. Alona Dickerson, a second-grade teacher, describes her initial skepticism of the idea of changing her traditional skills-based literacy program to a literature-based one: "I was the ditto queen," confesses Dickerson. "I believed it was my job to keep the kids busy while I worked with reading groups. In order for me to change my practice, I needed to be convinced that it was best for kids. 'Show me,' was my attitude."

The visit to New Zealand, which has one of the highest literacy rates in the world, convinced Dickerson to try new methods, but it was her own research that has allayed her fears that children's skills might suffer in a nontraditional classroom. Over the last few years, she has watched children, particularly struggling readers, became successful and competent readers:

> At the end of the day I don't say, "My lecture was great. I did a great job today." I say, "The kids did a really good job today," and they leave saying it to themselves. It takes a lot of time to set up but the rewards are worth it. When we were using only basals, only six children in my first-grade classroom reached the level of *Beth's Bear Hug*, a book at second-grade proficiency. Last year, only six of 26 first-graders *didn't* make it *all the way through* the book. And this year, 15 of 25 second-graders are reading at the fourth-to-sixth-grade level. Only one student, who came at the end of the year, is not reading at grade level (Novick, 1998).

Clearly teacher observation and research can be powerful tools for informing and improving teaching practices. Good teachers have always built on children's understandings, seeking to understand learning from the child's point of view. Author and teacher Vivian Paley writes about the important role of self-reflection and sensitive attention to children's perspectives:

> The act of teaching became a daily search for the child's point of view, accompanied by the sometimes unwelcome disclosure of my hidden attitudes. The search was what mattered—only later did someone tell me it was research—and it provided an open-ended script from which to observe, interpret, and integrate the living drama of the classroom (1989, p. 7).

**Peer mentoring**. Learning new practices often involves changing old habits that have made teaching comfortable and predictable. Peer coaching provides additional avenues for teachers to share expertise, perspectives, support, and strategies with each other. Cohen, McLaughlin, and Talbert (1993) point out that "understanding teacher-thinking involves understanding how teachers respond to an ever-changing situation with knowledge that is contextual, interactive, and speculative" (p. 55). For this reason, they advocate that teacher development programs be structured around peer coaching or mentoring in which the relationship between learner and coach is grounded in actual classroom practice. Cherry Valley's Principal Meeks speaks enthusiastically about their implementation of peer mentoring:

> This is job-embedded, teacher-to-teacher—it's a collegial, one-on-one coaching relationship. Because the mentors have no evaluative role, and build on teachers' strengths, teachers feel free to take risks. Teachers are excited, and see it as a support, not a threat to their professional growth. It's very powerful. But peer mentoring can be threatening if it is introduced too early in a school change process, and when it is perceived by teachers as a top-down mandate. Building an inclusive school culture that supports inquiry and reflectivity is essential to its success.

### Building Cultural Bridges: Washington's Cheryl Koenig

As a "perpetual student of Spanish," Cheryl Koenig is always looking for ways to bone up on her grammar and practice her conversational skills. Six years ago, this veteran teacher from Manson, Washington, spent a month in Cuernavaca, Mexico, soaking up the country's language and culture. Living with a Mexican family and spending six hours a day in intensive Spanish classes gave Koenig plenty of opportunities to grasp the subtleties of the local dialect and learn the proper use of the subjunctive. But the most valuable thing Koenig brought back from her summer abroad was a deeper understanding of her students at Manson Elementary.

Located in rural North Central Washington, Manson Elementary serves a growing Hispanic community. Lured by steady jobs in the area's orchards, packing sheds, and burgeoning tourism industry, migrant families from Mexico have steadily become permanent residents causing the school's Hispanic population to explode by 350 percent since 1993. Today, close to 70 percent of Manson's 390 K-6 students are Hispanic, and nearly half have limited English ability.

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"Visiting Mexico gave me a huge understanding of where my kids are coming from—both them and their families," explains Koenig, 48, who has been teaching since 1973. "When the entire culture is new to you, and you don't understand what people are saying or what you're supposed to be doing, it is overwhelming. This helped me know what our students are going through."

With language barriers making the school's traditional curriculum ineffective for a growing number of students, connecting with kids and their families has taken on new importance at Manson over the past few years. Inspired by her trip, Koenig, who is also the school's Title VII grant coordinator for bilingual education, came up with an idea for a program where other teachers could study Spanish and travel to Mexico. The district and school board agreed to set aside money from the budget, and Manson's Spanish for Educators program was born.

Staff can participate in the program in two ways. During the summer, the district pays for an intense, 40-hour week of Spanish instruction for interested staff. Those who want to take classes on their own can do so; the district will pay for the classes, but it doesn't compensate them for their time. After completing 40 hours of Spanish instruction, staff are eligible to travel to Mexico for a two- or four-week program. Koenig looks for established study-abroad programs that offer college credit. In addition to Cuernavaca, teachers have visited Morelia, Mexico, through a program at Central Washington University. Many Manson families have come from both regions.

The program has three primary goals, according to Janet Cline, Director of State and Federal Programs for Manson School District:

- To have teachers experience the frustration, the breakthroughs, the progression of learning a second language
- To increase their Spanish skills
- To provide a sense for staff of where students come from

With effective professional development, notes Cline, "there is never a single thrust. It has to be many things, at many times, for many people. This program does that."

After five years, what keeps the program going strong? Flexibility is key. While the staff has enthusiastically welcomed these opportunities, sometimes interest and available dollars don't match up. New babies and other commitments meant that one summer no one could make the trip to Mexico; another year there wasn't enough money in the budget. By taking it one year at a time and accepting whatever commitment people are willing to give, the school is usually able to meet everyone's needs. This summer, for example, a Title VII bilingual grant is sending the six eligible staff members to Mexico. Some teachers, like Koenig, have even made repeat trips, and last year the school nurse, librarian, and counselor went, too. Eighteen people—about a third of Manson's staff—have visited Mexico so far. An additional 15 have participated in the weeklong summer Spanish course.

Teachers at Manson don't have to search to find other opportunities for staff development. Adopt-A-Family is a summer literacy and enrichment program that pairs paid staff members with families in need of one-on-one literacy support. About once a week, staff visit the family home to work on literacy activities. Last year the program culminated in a group field trip to Seattle, where a busload of students, parents, grandparents, siblings, teachers, and paraprofessionals visited the zoo and shared a picnic in a nearby park. Cline explains that while the program "is not really staff development in the usual sense," it does improve school climate and encourage communication between teachers and families.

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Monday Madness, another activity funded by Title VII, takes place three Mondays a month throughout the school year. Staff spend an hour or two after school – they are paid $25 an hour – discussing such topics as Washington's assessment, teaching and learning strategies for bilingual students, and using technology to enhance teaching and learning.

While professional development is just one part of Manson's improvement plan, these programs seem to be making a difference. Student achievement levels have improved dramatically over the past five years, families are more involved in their children's education, and Manson was named a 1998-99 Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education. After 17 years at the school, Koenig has seen what these programs can do. "We used to be a disjointed staff," she admits. "This has really pulled us together."

Source: Moores, S. (2000, summer). How I spent my vacation. *Northwest Education*, pp. 34-35.

## Conclusion

Although schools have traditionally been places where teachers engage in direct instruction of 30 children who work quietly at their seats, this model of "teaching as telling" is giving way to an approach based on a view of children as actively engaged in constructing their own understandings through interactions with the social and physical environment. In order to change teaching practices, teachers often have to change deeply held beliefs about how children learn and develop. "The key," according to Caine and Caine (1997), "is to examine the cement that binds our opinions to us" (p. 251).

But the examination of teaching practices can't stop at the belief level. Advises Northwest educator Kay Sagmiller (1998), "Making our unconscious beliefs conscious is the first step. Then we have to actively work to increase the congruence between what we *say* we believe and what we are *actually* doing. This is not a one-time event—it is an ongoing process." In this process, the principal plays a crucial role. Sagmiller explains:

> Traditionally, principals have been thought of as managers; they have been trained to think in terms of "time to be allocated," and classrooms to be assigned. In this role, they often thought of teachers and children as "things to manage," rather than as rich sources of knowledge and expertise. In a community of learners, what counts are relationships, dialogue, facilitating joint inquiry, and building a climate of trust.

Environments that support learning by all have been variously described as "learning organizations" (Senge, 1990), " a community of learners" (Sergiovanni, 1991), and "professional communities" (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Characteristics of these environments include:

- Supportive and shared leadership
- Members who have a collective commitment to and shared responsibility for the goals of the organization
- A collaborative, non-isolatory work environment, and
- People who are in a continual process of learning and reflecting (Sagmiller, 1998)

To create and maintain these conditions requires ongoing discussion about how best to meet the needs of children and families. Through many opportunities for participation in meaningful activities, school faculties can avoid the "burnout" and the danger of having continuous improvement turn into what Hargreaves (1995) described as "*interminable* improvement—where no one values heritage and such vital ingredients of schooling as tradition, continuity, and consolidation" (p. 18). Instead, a commitment to continuous improvement means that it is second nature for teachers to continually assess what they are doing, why they are doing it, and how they can more effectively help children learn.

In order to create and maintain such supportive environments, not only roles and relationships, but policies, will have to change. For example, the practice of moving principals and teachers every few years is inconsistent with the goal of creating a climate of respect and interdependence. Yet, nationally, turnover of principals remains high.

Finally, time, the biggest and most intractable barrier to effective staff development, will have to be made available. If schools are to become exciting places for children to grow and learn, then teachers and principals, like children, need opportunities to become actively involved in their own learning process.

### Professional Development at Hawthorne Elementary: A Conversation with Principal Betty Cobbs

*Hawthorne Elementary is rich in different cultures and languages. Of 605 students, 226 are learning English as a second language. A total of 14 different languages, including Arabic, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese, Marshalese, and Ukrainian are spoken in this North Everett school. But, as one of the lowest-performing schools in the district for a number of years, it was clear to veteran principal Betty Cobbs that neither teachers nor students were living up to their potential. In the year since her arrival at Hawthorne, Cobbs has helped teachers bring about a 20 percent increase in WASL reading scores, a 15 percent increase in writing, and a 12 percent increase in math.*

*In the following conversation with Cobbs, we asked about Hawthorne's new approach to school reform:*

Success comes from understanding the children that you work with, having high standards and expectations, having a clear focus, improving the skill level of teachers, regular assessments,and effective communication. Increasing the skill level of the staff requires a team approach. You have to know what it is that you are working toward in order to do the work and see results.

We have to talk to each other; all of what we are doing to come together on the same page makes all of the difference. If we look at kids doing well in school, they need to do well not only this year, but in subsequent years. Kindergarten teachers need to be concerned about what fifth grade is doing, and they need to take ownership in the role they play in preparing their students for fifth grade. That's where you look at K-5 articulation; we have to know what everyone is doing and we have to communicate about what kids need to know and be able to do.

We need to move beyond what they know to things that are performance based; kids need to be able to apply this knowledge in different situations. That's where the problemsolving comes in throughout the curriculum, you really need to be able to use information in the real world. It's a transformation of how we teach and how we measure kids' learning. Whether we call it knowledge or understanding, kids need to be able to demonstrate understanding through performance. **(continued)**

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That's why we decided to adopt ATLAS, a school reform model that improves learning outcomes for all students by:

- Evaluating student work through a variety of standard and innovative assessment tools
- Engaging teachers in serious and sustained professional development
- Involving families and other members of the community in the education of their children
- Reorganizing the internal structures and decisionmaking processes within schools and districts to support all of the above.

The guiding habits of ATLAS communities are: Habits of Mind, Habits of Heart, Habits of Work, Habits of Reflection, and Habits of Voice. The major part of our professional development is done in study groups which results in improving teaching and learning in the classroom. Teachers are spending time looking at student work in order to determine whether or not they need to be teaching differently. If kids are not doing what we expect them to do, it might mean that our teaching needs to change and that our students may not be understanding. Following our protocols in study groups has helped to keep us focused on our efforts to improve learning for all. Another important feature of the ATLAS design is the "pathway" feeder pattern of elementary, middle, and high schools. As a part of our Northend ATLAS Corridor our school works with another elementary, middle, and two high schools. Our goal is to create a seamless system for our students as they transition from one level to the next.

The faculty participated in three days of summer training in preparation for the work we would be involved in as an ATLAS site. Our first challenge was creating study groups, based on the needs of our student population. We used data from our building and our site plan to study our needs. After brainstorming study group topics staff were able to select the group they wanted to be a member of. Each group then worked on writing an action plan, framing the study group topic in a question. We have seven study groups that all deal with increasing specific skills to improve learning.

Teachers study reports, literature, research, and information from the district, state, and national agencies; they investigate effective instructional practices and materials, and demonstrate and practice effective instructional practices. Teachers also design lessons and materials, as well as adapting existing materials. Student work is examined and assessed in a variety of ways. Our study groups have addressed a number of questions, including:

- How to teach kids to understand nonfiction
- How to create better writers; how to improve writing skills using conventions
- How to get students to improve their oral communication and presentation skills
- How to get children to understand their reasoning through problem-solving
- How to increase vocabulary in our early learners so they are able to explain their thinking; and
- How to motivate first-graders to write

I think that's going to make a difference for us. Leadership among staff is one component that is evident in successful schools. There is much leadership within this building; the climate of the school is very positive. Last year it was up and down, but we all agreed to proceed in the way I described. The study groups are run by the teachers, not by the principal. When they meet, they talk about what they learned in their study groups and what they did that made a difference in their classroom. In the study group, they must agree on what they are going to try in the classroom.

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During the year my staff will be involved in more training focusing on "Teaching For Understanding" and will participate in meetings with the other corridor schools focusing on the successful articulation process between levels. We've had a lot of support as a school. My supervisor supported us through the training, learning along with my staff about the ATLAS design. My role in the study groups is to just monitor; I ask questions and challenge the thinking of the group. I act as trouble-shooter, as the gofer. I get the supplies based on their requests. I have to reevaluate how I spend money and, fortunately, I can refer to my colleagues who have been involved with Atlas for three years. They give me advice, help me grow. We principals this year will be in a study group format.

There is a strong family involvement component in the model and with our Title I program; we do provide opportunities for parents to be involved inside and outside the school. Now we are offering more, paying attention to communication. Work in the ATLAS study group calls for two early dismissals each month, and it is important that we communicate to the parents what we are doing. We are working, not correcting papers or going home early, but we are working. Through a weekly newsletter, we talk about what teachers are doing when the kids go home early.

Part of the Atlas model requires teachers to keep a log of what they do in the study groups; copies of their log are posted on the bulletin board in the main foyer on public display. Parents can read the logs anytime. We are sharing our work with the parents and public. As part of our quarterly meetings with the other four schools we work with, we'll have a week of celebration in which each school will have one evening where they display student work. Any parents and community members from any of these schools will be invited to see what kids are doing in each school.

The kids are bright, I remind my staff all the time. That's our challenge—to find ways to engage children so that they are learning and understanding and able to perform. Teachers really have the hardest job in the world, working with the minds of children.

I also believe that educating children should not fall solely on the school. The schools need to do their part, but parents, community, and business need to also take responsibility for our kids. They need to support public education, support teachers, support families, support legislation that supports public education of children, and also be there to lend a hand in the process.

**Changing the core of educational practice**. Effective professional development, then, is grounded in the questions and concerns of those who work closely with children, and, in Little's words (1993), is "intricately interwoven with the daily life of the classroom" (p. 137). In this approach to professional development, teachers are viewed not as technicians, but as intellectuals (Giroux, 1988), teacher leaders, peer coaches, and teacher researchers (Lieberman, 1995). Ample opportunities for teachers and principals to engage in reflective study of teaching practices, experimentation, collaborative problem solving, and peer mentoring in a supportive climate are essential.

Most importantly, creating learning communities where everyone is engaged in challenging and meaningful activities requires changes in the "core of educational practice"—changes in the "fundamental relationships among student, teacher, and knowledge" (Elmore, 1996). These changes in relationships are particularly critical for culturally diverse children and their families. Based on research with diverse cultures, Cummins (1986) concluded that, "Implementation of change is dependent upon the extent to which educators, both collectively and individually, redefine their roles with respect to minority students and communities (p. 18).

Yet, as our schools increasingly are becoming culturally diverse, our teachers are becoming increasingly White and middle class (Delpit, 1995). When members of the dominant culture have little opportunity to experience other ways of seeing and knowing, other world views are dismissed as illusions (Highwater, 1981) or as deficient, in need of remediation. When differences in learning styles and experience with standard English are perceived as deficits, low expectations of children's academic potential may become a self-fulfilling prophecy.
Notes Malagon:

> Schools are not prepared for the diversity of the student population. Some districts have as many as 60 languages spoken within their schools, so of course, teachers have to teach children who don't speak English. Sadly, there is sometimes a belief that no English equals no knowledge. Schools often use a deficit model—seeing students as deficient rather than seeing them as needing another approach to learning. Too often it becomes: "You don't understand me; therefore you don't know."

The Unity Project has helped to raise awareness of the influence of culture and race on teaching and learning. In some cases, schools and communities have joined together to create culturally relevant learning experiences for children, families, and school faculties. In the following section, we will discuss some of these practices, highlight relevant research, and include interviews with teachers, students, and families.

# Chapter IV

## "She Was Just As Smart Being Huy-Yon, But Her Grades Went Up When She Became Shirley"

*Every child has the right to feel included. Every child has the right to have the opportunity to feel inclusive of others. This must happen every day, lesson after lesson. Learning is a process, not an event, and learning about diversity is most effective when integrated into the daily life of the classroom.*(Morefield, 1998)

In this country, educators have often viewed children who speak languages and dialects other than Standard English as deficient, in need of remediation. Culturally influenced differences in learning styles and communication patterns are often interpreted as problems to be addressed. As a 1918 superintendent noted, the objective for all immigrant children was "absolute forgetfulness of all obligations, or connections with other countries because of descent of birth" (Yzaguirre, 1999). This sentiment is illustrated by the following story: According to legend, Henry Ford periodically staged a ceremony to celebrate "the great American melting pot." In the ceremony, newly arrived immigrant employees, dressed in their ethnic attire, walked behind a large caldron. When they emerged on the other side, dressed in their new company-provided overalls, they symbolically disposed of their ethnic clothing in the caldron.

Schools have reflected this melting pot concept of America. The role of public education has been not only to produce future workers but to socialize students into the existing social, economic, and political ideologies by transmitting knowledge, skills, and social and moral rules of the culture (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972). In order to achieve this enculturation, schools are often designed to "use educational technology to 'stamp' a uniform education on all students" (Bowman, 1994). However, the absence of continuity and congruence between the child's home culture and the school—an absence of shared meaning—may interfere with children's competent functioning in the new setting.

### Theories of Cultural Discontinuity

From the early part of the 20th century, theories of cultural discontinuity have been proposed in an attempt to explain the difficulty encountered by students in adapting to a school environment foreign to the societal norms of their ethnic community. Researchers have found that by the age of eight, disparities between the home and school cultural values and patterns of communication may undermine children's enthusiasm for learning and their belief in their capacity to learn (Cummins, 1986; Entwisle, 1995). For example, many classrooms emphasize individual responsibility and achievement, competition, and teacher controlled learning.

Other cultural groups, such as some Asian groups, Native Americans, and Alaska Natives, may be unaccustomed to this style of learning, and instead place a higher value on group work that fosters shared responsibility. Such differences may undermine learning in the school context.

Cultural differences may also influence views of power and authority in the classroom. According to author and educator Lisa Delpit, African American children are often raised to expect authority figures to earn authority through personal efforts and exhibit it through personal characteristics, while middle-class White teachers may view their authority as being derived from their roles as teachers. In order to establish a more egalitarian and nonauthoritarian classroom atmosphere, White teachers may use questions instead of directives, but with the same expectation for the child to obey. For example, when a White teacher asks, "Is this where the scissors belong?" she is really telling a child that the scissors are in the wrong place and need to be moved (Delpit, 1995).

In contrast, many Black teachers are more likely to view the act of posing a directive as a question as offering a true alternative. Instead they tend to say, "Put those scissors on that shelf." Delpit points out that "the attempt by the [White] teacher to reduce an exhibition of power by expressing herself in indirect terms may remove the very explicitness that the child needs to understand the rules of the new classroom culture." The misunderstandings that result from very different communication styles may lead to the labeling of the African American child as non-compliant or even behavior-disordered, in need of special education.

**The Native American experience.** As a group that has fared poorly in their engagements with formalized schooling, American Indian and Alaska Native children offer an example of how cultural discontinuity can place children at risk in our schools. The purging of tribal cultures, traditional knowledge, and language began in the boarding school policies beginning in the late 19th century. Children were separated from their families, often as young as three years of age, and taught at government boarding schools where they were forbidden to speak their native languages. Many believe the loss of traditional Native American knowledge and languages is intimately related to the problems of high dropout rates and poor academic achievement (Gallagher, 2000).

Although there are vast differences among tribes and within tribes in language, history, customs, and degree of assimilation, many American Indian tribes share common perspectives and values that differ from mainstream America in a number of ways. A preference for cooperation versus competition; visual learning and the use of imagery; a global, holistic, reflective learning style; a tolerance for silence and a respect for reticence—all may place a child in conflict with the values, teaching styles, and assessment methods of the classroom (Van Hamme, 1996).

Native children's deep concern for the needs of the tribe and family members may be seen by teachers as problematic for progress and a cause of school failure (Deyhle, 1992). In addition, different cultures have varying standards of what is and is not acceptable behavior. In traditional Native American culture, it is inappropriate to set oneself apart from one's peers, and the cultural role for the pupil requires listening and watching the teachers—not questioning or answering queries (Paul, 1991). A Native American parent points out how teachers may interpret culturally influenced behavior in ways that do not foster supportive relationships:

> There is a lack of education on the part of educators and the school district. We have a unique cultural component, separate from the rest of the world. We're reserved, conservative. We are not loud, not boisterous, we move slowly. We don't jump to decisions without careful thought and deliberation. If our kids are targeted by the teacher, they will clam up. They don't want to attract attention. Teachers see this as a lack of participation, that kids are unwilling to try to be part of the class, or not asking for help when they need it. Sometimes the quietness and shyness is seen as being snobbish.

**Cultural influences on thinking**. It is not only communication styles and values that may be different for different cultural groups. Recent research has demonstrated that people who grow up in different cultures do not just think about different things; they *think* differently. Western philosophers and psychologists have long believed that the strategies people adopted in processing information and making sense of the world around them were the same for everyone. These characteristics include a devotion to logical and analytical reasoning, a penchant for categorization, and an urge to understand situations and events in linear terms of cause and effect (Goode, 2000).

However, in a series of studies comparing European Americans and East Asians, Dr. Richard Nesbett and his colleagues found that "cognitive processes themselves are far more malleable than mainstream psychology assumed." Easterners, the researchers found, appear to think more holistically, paying greater attention to context and relationship, relying more on experience-based knowledge than abstract logic, and showing more tolerance for contradiction. Both styles, Dr. Nesbett said, have advantages and limitations, and neither approach is written into the genes; rather, differences in cognitive approaches are culturally influenced. The researchers concluded that psychologists may have to radically revise their ideas about what is universal and what is not, and to develop new models of mental processes that take cultural influences into account (Goode, 2000).

When teachers understand how differences in communication and cognitive processes influence learning, they can acknowledge and build on cultural differences, while at the same time preparing children to live successfully in both worlds—their home culture and the larger society. John McCoy, Executive Director of Governmental Affairs of the Tulalip Tribe, explains how education should help culturally diverse children to "walk in two worlds":

> I want our children to be able to have a full life in understanding and participating in their own culture, but also educated on the ways of the non-Indians so that they can survive in both worlds. We need to maintain our culture, recover our first language, and build on that but still be able to function in a world that's really not ours.
>
> There needs to be a blend of the culture, in our case, Tulalip Tribe culture, in the blending of that education, because there is the issue that Native Americans kind of walk in two worlds. We need to walk in our own culture and then be able to also walk in the non-Indian culture in order to survive.

### The Specter of Stigma and Racial Vulnerability

I have a good friend, the mother of three, who spends considerable time in the public school classrooms of Seattle, where she lives. In her son's third-grade room, managed by a teacher of unimpeachable good will and competence, she noticed over many visits that the extraordinary art work of a small Black boy named Jerome was ignored--or, more accurately perhaps, its significance was ignored. As genuine art talent has a way of doing--even in the third grade--his stood out. Yet the teacher seemed hardly to notice. Moreover, Jerome's reputation, as it was passed along from one grade to the next, included only the slightest mention of his talent. Now, of course, being ignored like this could happen to anyone--such is the overload in our public schools. But my friend couldn't help wondering how the school would have responded to this talent had the artist been one of her own, middle-class White children.

Terms like "prejudice" and "racism" often miss the full scope of racial devaluation in our society, implying as they do that racial devaluation comes primarily from the strongly prejudiced, not from "good people" like Jerome's teacher. But the prevalence of racists--deplorable though racism is--misses the full extent of Jerome's burden, perhaps even the most profound part. He faces a devaluation that grows out of our images of society and the way those images catalogue people. The catalogue need never be taught. It is implied by all we see around us: the kinds of people revered in advertising (consider the unrelenting racial advocacy of Ralph Lauren ads) and movies (Black women are rarely seen as romantic partners, for example); media discussions of whether a Black can be President; invitation lists to junior high school birthday parties; school curricula; literary and musical canons. These details create an image of society in which Black Americans simply do not fare well.

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## Examining Deeply-Held Societal Beliefs

*We want one class of persons to have a liberal education and we want another class of persons, a very much larger class of necessity in every society, to forego the privilege of a liberal education and fit themselves to perform specific difficult manual tasks.*(Woodrow Wilson)

In addition to cultural incongruity between home and school, Ogbu (1982; 1991) argues that social and economic stratification leads to rejection of schooling by some groups when they see that schooling does not necessarily translate into social and economic gains. Unlike many immigrant groups who come voluntarily to this country to "begin a new life," minority groups such as American Indians and African Americans were incorporated into U.S. society against their will. Due to a history of slavery, oppression, forced assimilation, segregation, and discrimination, they often do not view their situation as temporary; rather they believe that their "caste-like" status is a result of permanent and institutionalized discrimination. These beliefs may contribute to a rejection and distrust of schooling (Ogbu, 1993).

In a recent report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, our government made a historic acknowledgment that racism remains an obstinate American problem. The report describes the pervasiveness of racial bias in housing, education, and other areas of American life. Other reports document widespread racial disparities in the criminal justice system, including racial profiling, racial disparities in sentencing and incarceration, and in the implementation of the death penalty. African American and Hispanic children are 2.5 times as likely as White children who engage in comparable behavior to be tried as adults, and 8.3 times as likely to be incarcerated (Bond & Henderson, 2000).

In addition to a distrust of schooling that may result from continued societal disadvantage and discrimination, Claude Steele, Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, argues that there

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. . In ways that require no fueling from strong prejudice or stereotypes, these images expand the devaluation of Black Americans. They act as mental standards against which information about Blacks is evaluated: that which fits these images we accept; that which contradicts them we suspect. Had Jerome had a reading problem, which fits these images, it might have been accepted as characteristic more readily than his extraordinary art work, which contradicts them.

Source: Steele, C. (1992, April). Race and the schooling of black Americans. *Atlantic Monthly* .

is "something else that depresses Black achievement at every level of educational preparation: the devalued status of his race devalues him and his work in the classroom" (Steele 1992). One of the most persistent and pernicious constructs in education is the bell curve. Washington educator and author John Morefield (1998) is adamant that this construct does not apply to learning:

> In order for educators to believe that all children must learn, many of them must unlearn some deeply held societal beliefs. They must change the belief that intelligence is fixed at birth. The common thought for many years has been that IQ is innate, fixed and, in any population, distributed along a continuum best represented by the bell curve. We must throw out the bell curve as an acceptable operational value for schools.
>
> The bell curve is a mathematical construct designed to illustrate the law of physics that explains behavior of random inanimate objects. The bell curve has made it legitimate to say that, "we can't educate all children because not all children are educable." We grade on the curve. We rely on tests that are philosophically pinned to a bell curve that says some will fail, some succeed, and the majority will fall in the middle. But the bell curve does not apply to human beings engaged in learning. We must eliminate the belief that in any classroom there is a certain percentage of gifted, average, and special education students.

When school faculties hold a belief—conscious or unconscious—that minority students will fall on the lower end of the bell curve, these beliefs can have a profound effect on students' academic self-image. When a child's academic self-esteem is threatened, he or she may react by de-emphasizing school achievement as a source of self-esteem, turning instead to peer-group relations. While the peer group offers a more viable basis for self-esteem, rejection of schooling may be the price a child pays for a sense of belonging.

In addition, schools often reflect only White culture and achievements in their curriculum and environments (Delpit, 1995). In order for students of color to affirm their cultural and racial identity, they may develop an oppositional identity in relation to the dominant culture. Doing well in school may be viewed as "acting White." A Mexican American mother of two school-aged children describes peer pressure among Mexican American teenagers in her community:

> One of the reasons for the underachievement of some minority groups is peer pressure from other children who are the same ages. When they are succeeding in schools, they're called nerds or they're told that they're trying to be somebody other than who they are. Especially, when kids are not working up to potential or they're not doing well in school, and get behind, these children will tend to put successful children down.

I don't know if they don't want them to succeed or if they just want them to stay with them. I'm not sure. I really have no reason, no understanding of why. But peer pressure, especially in middle and high school, is a big thing.

"Doing well in school requires the belief that school achievement can be a promising basis of self-esteem, and that belief needs constant reaffirmation, even for advantaged students," writes Steele. Creating schools that help children foster a positive self-image is even more critical for children from cultural groups who may suffer from low expectations, prejudice, and discrimination. "I think the number-one obstacle we had to overcome in our school was the expectation that our kids couldn't learn," says McCarver Elementary Principal Carl Cason. "The one thing we had to do was convince our teachers that our kids could learn."

One of the first steps teachers can take toward creating inclusive and unbiased classrooms and schools is to engage in reflective self-analysis to examine their own attitudes toward different ethnic, racial, gender, and social class groups (Banks & Banks, 1995; Delpit, 1995; Phillips, 1988).

**A Conversation with DaVerne Bell, a Vancouver School District Staff Member Who Specializes in Student Advocacy, Student Equity, and Multicultural Diversity**

What can schools do to promote cultural awareness and sensitivity?

I think that teachers could do more within a classroom to be inclusive. I get a lot of calls from teachers who want to know what they can do for Black History Month. And I talk a lot about "let's not play the 'culture-of-the-month-game;' let's acknowledge it, but let's not get caught up in it." For example, November is Native American Month. But one of the things that can be really culturally offensive is Thanksgiving. I think I have finally stopped teachers calling me at Thanksgiving wanting to know if there's a Native American family who can come and dance. Why do I need to explain why Columbus Day is not a holiday for Native American children? From the native perspective, how do you discover a country that was already inhabited by a group of people, and proceed to take it from them? How do we celebrate that?

But then I say to teachers, "Let's talk about what you can do." I ask teachers, "what about the ethnicities in your classroom? Why not do a multicultural week or whatever you want to call it? I'll say, let's start with the kids in your classroom." My reason [illegible] that is teaching respect of each other within that classroom. Get the kids involved in making some type of storyboard or presentation about their individual ethnic heritage to share with the classroom. If you run out of different ethnicities, then pick one of those that you finished at the beginning, and start the process all over again. What you create is a full school year of integration, of being inclusive, of giving those little tidbits of knowledge and experience about other cultures rather than waiting for the "month" thing.

I guess one of the biggest things anytime you're dealing in an area where there's not much diversity in a community or an educational system is to get people to drop the walls, to get people not to be so defensive. The automatic thing is people want to be defensive and start making excuses and explaining. Drop the walls. If someone lets you know that something you did was culturally insensitive, ask yourself the question, "What is it I could be doing?" Because to me it's a human respect and dignity issue.

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A lot of our reluctance to talk about race is fear, not knowing where to begin. If I bring this up (it's not just within the school system, it's within the community as well), if I bring this up, do I make something an issue that's not really an issue because I brought it up? There is a strong element of fear not knowing what to do, "am I mucking the waters, am I creating a problem?" Rather than asking the question, "am I providing an inclusive education, am I teaching human dignity and respect, am I giving the full picture?" To me that's the bottom line. Because if we're doing that, I truly believe in my heart, regardless of the home life that children are coming from, if they have that safe inclusive haven, that respectful haven in the school, you are making a difference.

Sometimes I get teachers who want to learn, and want to learn what to do when something they have done is seen as culturally insensitive—when they have stuck their foot in it. So we talk about it. We talk about why what happened may be culturally offensive and the impact that it has on everybody in the classroom, not just the child or family that was offended. Because I see it as a continual learning process, and to me in one respect there are really no mistakes if you learn from them. If you can take what is a bad moment, and teach human dignity and respect for all, then the bad moment really had a purpose. It's a learning experience that the whole group will never forget.

To me, teachers—education—hold a stronger power than a lot of home situations. They're the making-and-breaking situation for a lot of kids. How many times do you hear the stories of kids that say this teacher saved their life, because this teacher simply cared about them and believed in them, and told them that they could achieve anything. Where at home they were told that they were stupid and ignorant and would never amount to anything? Whether people want to admit it or not, there's an awful lot of influence and power and control that the education system has, so it should be used to the ultimate good.

I know an African American teacher whose story shows you the impact of respect. When I first met her six years ago, her third-grade classroom was actually focusing on one culture for the entire year. The year I visited her classroom they were studying the Arabic-speaking countries. When I entered the classroom, it was all decorated in things from Arabic countries. And in the corner, she has what is called the story corner. This year it was all draped with Arabic fabrics, and when you entered the room, the kids spoke to me in Arabic and they welcomed me with, "welcome to our classroom, peace be with you."

Then they escorted me to the story corner, and they told me a story. Then they asked me tell them a story about my culture and my heritage. And within this classroom the kids also grew vegetables and herbs or food from that country, so they could actually experience that. The culture was integrated throughout the entire school year.

Powerful, powerful, because I'll never forget this little White girl coming up to me and pulling on my sleeve, and saying to me, "I have waiting three years to get into Miss Andrews class." This teacher incorporates the entire family; there were grandparents coming to bring things for the kids to learn from or volunteering in the classroom. The next year she did the Klickitat nation. She got Klickitat elders who adopted the class, who would regularly visit the class.

But sometimes, we forget that kids are people—that they have a voice, that they have an opinion, that they have feelings, that they hurt. We forget that school is impacting their lives; it's not just choking the ABCs down them. School impacts their entire being, their entire life.

## Reflective Self-Analysis

> *Critical to truly seeing and understanding the children we teach is the courage to reflect about ourselves. Facing our biases openly, recognizing the limits imposed by our embeddedness in our own culture and experience, acknowledging the values and beliefs we cherish, and accepting the influence of emotions on our actions are extraordinary challenges.*(Balabon, 1995)

As our schools are becoming increasingly culturally diverse, our teachers are becoming increasingly White and middle class (Delpit, 1995). As Liz Flynn observes, "No matter whether we are White or minority teachers, we have all been prepared to teach middle-class kids." Because our own cultural patterns, beliefs, and language are seldom part of our conscious awareness and seem quite natural, "just the way things are," we often forget that our beliefs and values are culturally and historically specific.

When members of the dominant culture have little opportunity to experience other ways of seeing and knowing, other world views are dismissed as illusions or as deficient, in need of remediation. We all bring our own "private collection of biases and limitations to the classroom," reminds author and educator Vivian Paley. In our interviews, several participants suggested that teachers should first get to know and understand their own culture and beliefs before trying to learn about others. A Native Hawaiian teacher spoke of racism among Whites, and observed, "And sometimes we don't recognize our own biases and prejudices also. I've come to find out that I have my own." A mother of three children had some advice for White teachers:

> The first thing to do is to understand your own culture as a White American. Understand your own culture, understand your own biases, your own experiences. Really delve into why is macaroni and cheese an American staple. Then take into consideration all that is culture—language, food, tradition, dance, religion. Then look at the differences in another culture and explore to the extent that you're able to take that knowledge and help children come to terms and understanding of their own culture. Do this, instead of assuming that a child comes from the White culture only—the same foods, same religion, same language, and experiences. Children are different, very different.

Clearly, achieving an understanding of one's own and other cultures can only be achieved through in-depth work. While workshops can help to begin a discussion, a long-term approach is necessary for real change. A family advocate in a school serving a large percentage of American Indian children expresses her skepticism about the proposed professional development to raise cultural awareness:

> The administrators are thinking about just doing workshops. In my opinion, it needs to be something that is done consistently and over a period of time. You can't change a person's beliefs or values over night; it takes years to do that, especially a person who has a strongly held perspective. There's a lot of ignorance, including not knowing what the culture is like, being afraid to find out. The tribe has felt intimidated coming into the school. That's part of the cultural ways of being non-confrontational and aggressive. Teachers see it as passive and not caring. Perspectives like that could be changed by getting to know more about each other.

A number of strategies can help all concerned gain the self-awareness needed to begin a school/community conversation about the deeply held, often taken-for-granted beliefs and biases that make up the ecology of the classroom and society. Workshops provided by representatives of diverse cultures offer a starting point. Teacher study groups focusing on race and culture, reflecting on one's own life story, and videotaping classroom interactions and examining them

for bias are all strategies that can foster self-reflection and understanding of difference. Tacoma Family Involvement Coordinator Bonnie Pinckney stresses the need for people to become aware of their underlying beliefs:

> We have to have the conversation, and we have to allow enough time for the conversation to develop so you can get at people's basic beliefs. People don't like to talk about these things anymore, but if you really truly think that some kids still are innately incapable because of where they came from, their race, or their financial status, then there will always be problems. If it's deep seated, then there's nothing I can say, because I know that if you get to those conclusions illogically, there's nothing logically I can tell you that will change it, nothing. It has to be a self-actualization.

While some respondents spoke of overt racism in schools, of being ostracized and put down by White teachers and administrators, most of those interviewed talked about instances of more subtle forms of racism—feeling ignored, invalidated, even invisible. McCarver's Principal Cason tells a story of a former student whose high school experience serves as a reminder of the importance of respect for children—an appreciation of who children are and where they come from:

> I had a child when I was at another school, a sixth-grader and her name was Huy-yon. I read about her in the high school paper where she was interviewed, and I couldn't believe when I read. She said that teachers wouldn't call her by her name because they couldn't pronounce it. So she decided to change her name to Shirley so that the teachers would call on her. When teachers could call her Shirley, they called on her more and her grades improved. She was just as smart being Huy-yon, but her grades went up when she became Shirley. I just want everybody to be comfortable with who they are, they don't have to be someone else in order to get along here. I know all of the kids by name and I call them by their given name. Our teachers respect their culture.

A number of respondents told stories of how low expectations of school staff can constrain student aspirations for higher education. A Mexican American teacher was still distressed about her experience as a high school graduate:

> When I was a high school graduate I went back to pick up a transcript. I had already been accepted to Oregon State University. I only went back to pick up my transcript, not to ask for any help of anybody. The principal took me in his office and asked why I wasn't considering a community college. And I took offense to that because he had never helped me get into a state school, and once I was there, he was trying to deter me from a bigger dream. Instead of helping me and supporting me, he was telling me to shoot lower.

DaVerne Bell, a district multicultural specialist (see sidebar) talked with a diverse group of high school students in her community and discovered a pattern of lowered expectations for students of color:

> The majority of students of color were not given any information or even asked a basic question about going on to college. There was an overriding pattern of assumption: because they were kids of color there was no interest on the part of the kid. One young man shared with me that he had had ambitions to go to law school. He constantly asked his counselor for information but could never get it.
>
> A young woman related that when she went to her counselor to ask about college, she was told she wasn't college material. "Why don't you go to vocational school?" her counselor asked. The young woman, who was African American and Native American, knew there was scholarship money available for minorities. So, all on her own, she got herself a scholarship to Spellman College. I followed up on her to see what happened. She told me: "Yes, I went to Spellman, and then I went back to high school to tell them what I had done. The counselor said, 'Oh, you didn't go to vocational school?'"

Like Bell, many of those interviewed told stories of resilient children who beat the odds, who succeeded despite economic hardship and low expectations. But they expressed concern for those who had less positive outcomes. In a conversation with Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribal members, Ron Charles, Tribal Chairman, and one of the first students from the Port Gamble Indian Community to graduate from North Kitsap High School, observed:

> My grandson is 14 and he has experienced what I feel is racism, and we as family need to help him work through it. We need to tell him, just as my parents told me, "You will encounter this. You have to deal with it." And so we did. But a lot of people didn't; they dropped out. Some of us barely made it—we had strong parents to help us through. But many kids are not getting a positive experience.

"It was the same with my family," said Diana Purser. "They taught us skills in how to respond. It is still painful, but you can do it. Still, when I was in high school, I felt alone. It was a day-to-day struggle. It is hard to deal with injustice--even when it is not overt, the subtlety wears on you." The Port Gamble Tribe is addressing these concerns through a series of Building Bridges Summits designed to create a dialogue with the North Kitsap School District and the Tribe. The goal is to "craft strategies and ventures to improve the educational environment and achievement of our children," says Ted George, a tribal elder (for a more detailed description of the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe's efforts, see the section at the end of this chapter).

Some respondents expressed the belief that racism is deeply ingrained in our schools, so ingrained that it often goes unrecognized, even by those who experience it. A Mexican American mother and educator expressed this view:

> Racism is so ingrained that we don't even notice it. Not even Mexican teachers, not even Mexican parents see it. We think, "It's just the way I've always been treated; this is the way I've always been addressed. This is how I will be addressed, therefore, that is the right way to do it." I'm not sure the amount of effort that it's going to take—the time and money—is going to be put into understanding these ingrained ideas and beliefs. I just don't think racism in and of itself will be dealt with. It's too painful, and it would require too much change in the way the White Americans think. It just costs way too much emotionally and financially. But that's what I think needs to happen.

Despite some pessimism about the possibility about having a national conversation about culture and race, most of those interviewed believed that it should happen and that schools could begin a healing process for an entire community. "Schools are the heart of any community," says McCoy. "Everything gravitates toward a school. It depends on the attitudes of the people that work within that school on how successful the school will be within the community, but people just naturally gravitate towards the educational system." Teacher self-reflection, an examination of institutional racism, and exploration of other cultures are critical to becoming culturally competent and inclusive of the community. "Teachers need to be brought into a circle of awareness about culture." Purser says.

## Becoming Culturally Competent

> *The ideal of a single civilization for everyone, implicit in the cult of progress and technique, impoverishes and mutilates us. Every view of the world that becomes extinct, every culture that disappears, diminishes a possibility of life.* (Octavio Paz, 1967)

According to Terry Cross, founder and director of the National Indian Child Welfare Association, developing cultural knowledge is a key element of becoming culturally competent, which he defines as, "Functioning effectively within another person's or family's culture. Yet, learning about all the cultures represented in the classroom can be a daunting challenge. In Washington, there are 161 languages and cultures represented in the public schools. Cross acknowledges that the average practitioner cannot achieve comprehensive knowledge of all of the cultures of their students or clients.

In addition, most cultural groups are not homogeneous, representing different geographical locations, histories, experience, and degree of assimilation to Anglo culture. "Professionals who think of cultures as they were generations ago, who romanticize cultures, or who fail to see cultures as complex, dynamic, changing systems will quickly fall short of the goal of effective services, " writes Cross (1995-96).

### SOME THOUGHTS ON CULTURAL PLURALISM

Janet Gonzalez-Mena
November 1992

As a White, middle-class American with mostly Anglo-Saxon heritage (my Spanish surname comes from my husband), I was surprised to discover that I have a culture. I seldom thought about how I operate in a cultural context which influences everything I do, and even the way I think. I move within my cultural framework as unconsciously as I move within the physical world I live in. I don't think about putting one foot in front of another when I walk. I don't think about my culturally determined actions and ways of dealing with people—they're automatic.

When I meet someone who obviously doesn't move in the same cultural framework that I do, I'm jarred. Because my way seems right, even normal, I tend to judge others based on my own perspective. I may consider them exotic or interesting, or I may consider them weird. But being a polite person who tries to get along with others, I do what I can not to notice. Because my way is normal to me, it seems rude to make an issue of the fact that someone else is not normal. And because I have a whole society behind me giving me the message that "my people" are the standard by which everyone else is judged, I can afford to keep on ignoring what I chose to.

But can I? What does this attitude do to me? It shields me from reality. It gives me a narrow view. I miss out on a lot because of my slanted perspective. Besides, it gives me a false impression of importance, letting me believe that "my people" are the only ones who count in the world, where in reality White, middle-class, AngloAmericans like me are a small minority of the world population.

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Cross suggests the following steps to learn more about a culture:

First, spend more time with strong, healthy people of that culture.

Second, identify a cultural guide—that is, someone from the culture who is willing to discuss the culture, introduce you to new experiences, and help you understand what you are seeing.

Third, spend time with the literature. Reading articles by and for persons of the culture is most helpful. Along with the professional literature, read the fiction. This is an enjoyable way to enter the culture in a safe, nonthreatening way. Find someone with whom you can discuss what you have read.

Fourth, attend cultural events and meetings of leaders from within the culture. Cultural events allow you to observe people interacting in their community and see values in action. Observing leadership in action can impart you with a sense of the strength of the community and help you identify potential key informants and advisors.

Finally, learn how to ask questions in sensitive ways. Most individuals are willing to answer all kinds of questions, if the questioner is sincere and motivated by the desire to learn and serve the community more effectively.

One of the most powerful ways to learn about ourselves and our world is to understand our history (see Appendix C). Learning about the past is essential to work toward a more just and equitable society. Although schools typically confine learning about non-White cultures and history to a few days or months, the culturally diverse

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What does it do to those who are not "my people" if I continue in this narrow, slanted perspective, ignoring what I consider "not normal"? What does it do to people who are different from me to have their differences defined as "abnormal" and then overlooked? How does it feel to find some integral aspect of your identity unacknowledged?

My husband was born and raised in Mexico. Every now and then someone says to him, "I never think of you as being Mexican." They mean this as a compliment. Because I'm not Mexican, I don't know how this feels. But I can imagine how I would feel if someone complimented me by saying he never thinks of me as a woman. That would shock me because being female is a vital part of who I am, and I don't want to be considered genderless. I don't want anyone to stereotype me because I'm female. I don't want anyone to hold my gender against me or treat me unequally either, but I would feel very strange if someone made a point of ignoring a vital part of my identity.

I have a strong desire to quit ignoring differences and begin not only to notice them, but to celebrate them. I want to look at differences as sources of strength, not abnormalities or weaknesses. I don't expect to change all at once – in fact, I've been working on this shift of perspective for a number of years. Revising one's views can be a slow process.

Cultural pluralism is the notion that groups in the United States should be allowed, even encouraged, to hold on to what gives them their unique identities while maintaining their membership in the larger social framework. Mutual respect is the goal, though it isn't easy because we've been handed a deficit model where practices that differ from the mainstream, middle-class norm are not always viewed as cultural differences but instead as inadequacies.

We live in a country with a rich mix of cultures. We must do all we can to teach ourselves and help those around us to respect diversity.

Source: Gonzalez-Mena, J. (1992). Multicultural issues in child care (1st. ed.). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield

participants in our interviews were unanimous that their history, culture, and language should be an integral part of the school curriculum. Steele (1992) explains how a "culture of the month" approach devalues diverse cultures. He specifically addresses the African American experience:

> The particulars of Black life and culture—art, literature, political and social perspective, music—must be presented in the mainstream curriculum of American schooling, not consigned to special days, weeks, or even months of the year, or to special-topic courses and programs aimed essentially at Blacks. Such channeling carries the disturbing message that the material is not of general value. And this does two terrible things: it wastes the power of this material to alter our images of the American mainstream--continuing to frustrate Black identification with it—and it excuses in Whites and others a huge ignorance of their own society. The true test of democracy, Ralph Ellison has said, "is...the inclusion--not assimilation—of the Black man."

Like many educators throughout the country, some educators we interviewed preferred a "color blind" approach. "We don't see culture," said one administrator. "We only see kids. We have a school culture." However, most of those interviewed felt strongly that when children are not validated for who they are, and helped to make connections between what they already know and what they experience in school, failure is all too frequent. A Mexican American mother of two college students expressed her belief that children's low achievement often results from shame and embarrassment over cultural heritage:

> The children have to develop a voice—in grade school, middle school, and high school. They need to develop a voice about self-identity of who they are, where they come from, what their beliefs are, what their culture is, and not be embarrassed and ashamed of that. I speak from experience, because I have to overcome a lot of my own embarrassment and shame because it wasn't addressed in the schools.

> What happens when children's culture and language are not used in the school setting? Confusion. The child becomes confused, and again I speak from personal experience, being raised in the United States. My experience was never a part of the school, so I was trying to read and write about other people's experiences and never relating them to myself—never having the opportunity to recognize my strengths because of my culture. And never validating, even for myself, my own experiences and my culture so that I have something to hold on to when I'm reading and writing to compare and contrast.

A recently arrived parent from Mexico, whose children were born there, talked about the pressures her children felt to give up their culture and become "like the Americans." She explained why she thought it was important for the children's predominantly Latino school to include Mexican history and culture in the curriculum:

> We want our children to be proud of who they are. But our children are ashamed that they're from Mexico. My daughters ask me, "And me? Where was I born?" And if I answer, "Well, you were born in Mexico," they say, "Oh no, I thought I was born here." It's like they feel ashamed of that, that they have a poor opinion of Mexico, or maybe they just want to be like the Americans.

Education was seen by those interviewed as a way to validate and celebrate children's cultural identity, as well as to help everyone come to terms with our shared past, which includes centuries of oppression of people of color. The brutality of the slave trade, two-and-a-half centuries of slavery, segregation, and the legacy of social and economic inferiority it conferred upon Blacks and the racism it instilled in Whites are very much a part of our history (Johnson & Smith, 1998). They are not, as these authors point out, "someone else's history." Yet it is equally vital to recognize that the Black experience in America, in Ralph Ellison's words "is obviously more than the sum of its brutalization . . .Theirs has been one of the great human experiences and one of the great triumphs of the human spirit in modern times."

Our interviews with Native American educators and parents revealed a cautious optimism about the school's role in reviving and maintaining their cultures. Learning about their own history, including the decimation of entire tribes by disease and armed struggle, broken treaties, forced relocations and assimilation, was often a painful experience, but one that they felt was essential to understand the current reality of native peoples. A Native American tribal member and mother of two young children explains:

> I measure history in terms of generations, not time. My grandmother was raised by her mother, who was alive during the time when Indians had to give up their land, their culture, and their languages. How she was raised affects me today. All of it continues to impact me today. We are raised by people who learned from the people who raised them. It wasn't that long ago.
>
> When I read our legal history I cried. Our government made us wards, dependent. It took everything I had not to hate non-Indians. If more people understood our history, if they had a clue about how we are still fighting for survival, maybe there would be more respect. We are just learning our history ourselves. Modern times change so fast; technology changes us too. But we have missed out on our own history.

Like the Native American parent quoted above, many of those interviewed expressed the belief that education can help to develop mutual respect, and that racism is caused by ignorance and fear. Education was seen as an antidote to both. According to Tim Coulter, Executive Director of the American Indian Law Center in Helena, Montana, Washington State has had a strong undercurrent of anti-Native American sentiment for decades, stemming from disputes over fishing rights. A recent state Republican Party convention resolution calling for an end to tribal governments on reservations illustrates that this sentiment is still strong. John McCoy observed:

> We can minimize racism. If we know about other cultures, we will not be afraid of them. Racism comes from fear. We have a rather large Indian population in Washington State. All the misconceptions that are running around this state can only be broken down through education. The best way to educate is to teach about the tribes within the state. It needs to be taught from preschool until graduation. So hopefully some of these misconceptions and attitudes that seem to pervade this state will go away.

**Family Reading Nights**
**David Wolfle Elementary, Kingston, Washington**

Focused on teaching parents different ways to talk with children about books, David Wolfle Elementary's Family Reading Nights are helping to bridge two communities. Alternating the site between the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribal Center and the school is one of the ways that the school is trying to reach out to both native and non-native families. "It's amazing to me that some of our non-Native families had never been to Little Boston [the Port Gamble S'Klallam reservation], and they've lived here all their lives," says Principal Dixie Husser.

Geared toward families with children ages birth through eight, the reading nights also attract older siblings who like to assist the teachers with the younger children. At the reading nights, the children are read to while the parents meet in small groups and discuss creative ways to expand upon the book that the children are reading. Then the children read the book with their parents, and everyone enjoys a catered dinner. One recent reading night focused on storytelling, and several tribal members told stories, some using the S'Klallam language.

Says parent Angela Sullivan, "It made you really think of all the different ways to read to children." She adds:

> At one session they talked about talking with your child about the pictures in a story. It's obvious, but I didn't think about it. Another time they did projects related to the book. It shows different ways of getting a child interested, because some kids don't like to read. It's about trying to get kids hooked on books. I saw a lot of people who hardly ever leave Little Boston, and I think it opened up their eyes.

A collaborative committee made up of school staff and tribal members plans the nights and decides what books to use and what food to serve. A small grant written by the school allowed them to buy enough books so that all the children can take them home.

## Creating a Culturally Responsive Environment

Bowman (1994) suggests that in order for schools to release the educational potential of poor and minority students, they must first understand how these children have learned to think, behave, and feel. A Mexican American mother echoes this sentiment:

> Now we have Taco Bell, and White Americans like "ethnic food," which is great, but that's not enough in itself to encourage our children to have success. I think we need to address the issue of the total person. If you look at a Mexican child or a Mexican American child and really, truly think about that child, you'll see the differences, you'll know the differences of the language, the culture, the family life, experiences, the way they think—it's just different and we don't address that at all. When we do, it's superficial.

Rosegrant (1992), a teacher in a multilingual kindergarten, believes that the first place to start is with the child's family. In order to create a "culturally safe" classroom, she finds out as much as possible about the family backgrounds and experiences of all the children, by surveying parents, by reading multiple books on the represented cultures, and by careful observation of children to

"see what experiences seem to connect with them." She describes a little girl from Africa who had listened to many African stories before one in particular connected to her experience:

> The story was *Bringing in the Rain to Kapiti Plain*, and in it a shepherd is depicted standing on one leg—"like a stork." The child brightened immediately and yelled out, "That's how people stand in my country!" Her enthusiasm communicated to me that she feels culturally safe in our classroom (p. 146).

In order to legitimize the contributions of all people, primary classrooms should include pictures, puppets, dolls, foods, and other objects for dramatic play that represent diverse cultures and people with disabilities. A wide variety of multicultural learning activities and materials ensures that all children see themselves and their families reflected in the classroom environment. "I think that we need to have more culturally relevant curriculum in our classrooms, so that when they're coming into the classroom, they can recognize themselves in the whole educational process," notes a district Indian Education Coordinator.

Literature is one of the best ways to learn about diverse cultures and ethnic groups (see Appendix D). Krashen (1997) concluded that the biggest problem in bilingual education is the absence of books in both the first and second languages in the lives of students (both at school and at home). Several of those interviewed from a predominantly Mexican American community observed that there are few books in Spanish available, particularly books of high quality. Because throughout children's lives, the availability of high quality literature and expository texts are critical for developing and maintain a deep and abiding love of books and reading, these findings are troubling.

In addition to advocating for libraries to include a large selection of books written in the languages of their communities, schools can provide access to their own libraries to all family members. Whittier Elementary in Pasco, Washington, is an example of a Washington school that makes its library open from early in the morning through the evening (for a further discussion of the practices of Whittier Elementary, see Chapter II). Classroom libraries should also provide easy access to a variety of high-quality books. A well-stocked classroom should include:

- Songs and literature from a variety of cultures, lifestyles, and income groups—especially those represented in the classroom. Children need to see "people like themselves" in the stories they read.
- A take-home library of children's books in diverse languages, which encourages parents to reinforce the heritage language as well as to read to their children.
- Books and tapes in diverse languages and from diverse cultural perspectives — rather than mere translations of English stories—which are particularly salient for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Using multicultural literature dealing with issues pertaining to race, class, gender, or disability can teach children to think critically and, at the same time, build a democratic classroom and school (Braxton, 1999). In Beverly Braxton's third/fourth-grade classroom, the children read *Crow Boy* by Yaro Yashima, a story about Chibi, a boy who for five years is made to feel alienated and isolated at school. Children respond to questions that identify different ways people

reinforce discrimination, consider the power of nonverbal messages, and encourage understanding of what it feels like to be excluded based on differences. To help her students empathize with Chibi, Braxton asks them how they might feel if they were he. She asks: "How was Chibi made to feel? How might you feel if you were Chibi? Why might you feel that way?" (Braxton, 1999, p. 25).

A curriculum that emphasizes projects and joint inquiry can also help all children feel comfortable in the school setting. Projects that involve exploring the local community can help children understand the region they live in and can serve as the basis for integrating skills in math, science, art, history, and language arts (Rowe & Probst, 1995). These authors describe "an adventure in learning" that began when a third-grade class in Alaska abandoned its traditional science text and participated in weekly projects and field trips to study their community of the Pribilof Islands. The authors report that the project gave the students opportunities to apply prior knowledge in ways that validated their thinking, to learn what it means to be an Aleut, and to value their heritage.

**Including families.** Developing strong family/school partnerships is essential to providing cultural continuity for children (Wolfe, 1992). Encouraging children to bring pictures of their families and share favorite stories or songs from home, and asking family members to share aspects of their culture can help children feel secure and valued for who they are (Boutte & McCormick, 1992). Parents and other family and community members may be encouraged to visit the school to read, tell stories, and share oral traditions, beliefs and values, and knowledge of traditional celebrations, art, music, poetry, and dance (Wolfe, 1992).

It is important to respect a family's beliefs about sharing their culture and language; some families may feel that this practice is intrusive. Parents may also be actively trying to assimilate to the Anglo culture and may need support from a variety of sources to feel that their culture and language are respected in the school setting. Malagon notes:

> With parents, the focus is to involved them in their child's learning and in decisions that affect their child's schooling. Often, their comments are, "Oh, but you are educated" and I say "no, I'm schooled and you are educated." I encourage them to begin to identify and recognize what they already know. I validate their knowledge and demonstrate how their language and culture can be used for teaching. We are not proposing that parents not learn English or become part of the American culture, but we want them to build upon what they bring. We don't want to take away language and culture. We want to add. It's like after putting on the garment and then adding accessories

It is also important to help children be comfortable with their parents' visits. Because English is a high-status language, children may learn early that other languages are less valued, and feel ashamed of their home language and culture. A teacher in a Seattle Public Schools Head Start classroom tells how she dealt with a tense situation in her diverse classroom:

> Our children are used to diversity and tend to take most things in stride. But when Ruby, whose mother is deaf, entered our program, we noticed that she would ignore her

mother, often going to the far end of the room to avoid her. We soon realized that Ruby was embarrassed by her mother's use of sign language in the classroom. So we began teaching sign in circle and using it throughout the day. We brought in books in sign language, and the children loved to study them. Over the next few weeks, we watched Ruby change from being ashamed of her mother to being proud of her and of her own ability to use sign language. They became the experts.

## Summary

The multicultural curriculum advocated by many early childhood educators, then, is not merely a "tacos on Tuesday" or "tourist" approach to diversity, one that emphasizes the "exotic" differences between cultures by focusing on holidays, foods, and customs. Derman-Sparks (1989) points out that such an approach tends to ignore the real-life, everyday experiences and problems of other cultures and can lead to stereotyping. Instead, the suggested approach is to view multicultural education as a perspective that is integrated into the daily activities of the classroom.

All children benefit from a responsive and challenging curriculum that offers many opportunities for meaningful participation. Strategies that have been found to be particularly effective for culturally diverse and English language learners include:

- **School/family partnerships.** Family involvement is associated with numerous benefits, including increased academic achievement, improved student behavior, and more favorable attitudes toward school, and higher academic self-concept (Bermudez & Marquez, 1996). Utilizing the expertise of teachers, parents, and other community members of diverse cultural and linguistic groups can do much to counter the deeply held and often unconscious biases that guide our behavior and that may cause us to value only one way of talking, understanding, and behaving (Delpit, 1995).
- **Project-based learning**. A curriculum that emphasizes projects, hands-on activities, and joint inquiry engages students in meaningful, indepth learning across content areas (Berman, Minicucci, McLaughlin, Nelson, & Woodworth, 1995). Projects that involve exploring the local community can help children understand the region they live in and can serve as the basis for integrating the curriculum (Rowe & Probst, 1995). (See Chapters II and IV for a more indepth discussion of project-based learning).
- **A good supply of books in both first and second languages.** Research shows that time engaged in reading high quality books is strongly correlated with reading comprehension, vocabulary growth, and concept knowledge (Fielding & Pearson, 1994; Stanovich, 1986). Yet, studies have found that children read and write meaningful texts less than 10% of the time, and that schools with a majority of low -income children have 50% fewer books and magazines than more affluent schools (Allington, 1994). Krashen (1997) concluded that the biggest problem in bilingual education is the absence of books in both the first and second languages in the lives of students (both at school and at home) in these programs.
- **Use of cooperative learning.** Language minority students need frequent opportunities to interact with their native English speaking peers in academic situations (Anstrom, 1997). Opportunities to engage in active listening and speaking enhance oral language, interpersonal, and small group skills.

- **Multicultural literature**. Literature should contain themes relevant to the life experiences and cultures of language minority students. Using a multicultural social studies curriculum as a base, teachers can emphasize and build on the cultural and world knowledge of language minority students (Anstrom, 1997). For example, an oral history approach, in which students use language skills to interview and present information to classmates, can also involve parents and community members in the student's education.

### Eat a Bowl of Rice

"Eat a Bowl of Rice" is a Tacoma-based project that began in response to the gang-related shooting deaths of a group of Vietnamese youth. The project, which derives its name from the Vietnamese custom of sharing food with guests, was designed to bring the community's youth back in touch with cultural traditions and values. The project also provided a way for parents and the elderly to work with local youth. As a result of lack of real communication, some of the community's youth had drifted away from the traditional values of the home and culture.

"Eat a Bowl of Rice is a project that grew from wanting to make people feel good about what they can do," states one youth. "It's a way to learn something about our culture." Using grant money, the project's organizers provided each student with two disposable cameras and asked them to photograph the elements of their lives that were most important to them. Each student also received a stipend for the work. The photos, with accompanying essays, poems, stories, and recipes were compiled into a book with the same title as the project. The essays range from the personal to the practical including such titles as: "The Price of Freedom", "My Mother", and an essay about cultural values entitled, "Worth Preserving."

The shootings and the resulting project coincided with efforts already underway in the community to address the rise in violence. The indo-Chinese Cultural and Services Center began a series of workshops to help immigrant parents to understand the U.S. system of schooling and juvenile justice. The workshops were designed to help parents better connect with their children. Many of these parents had never been in a school before; they were astonished that they could just walk in and talk with the principal or request a meeting with the teacher. One outcome has been the creation of a support network, especially for non-English speaking parents, to help them become more involved in the school and support their children.

One year after the tragic shootings, a memorial was held and began with a ceremony at the crime scene. Then moved to the high school where photos and essays were mounted on panels for display. As part of the project, teens from around the county decorated the school cafeteria with photographs of their culture, from cooking parties to women gardening at their homes. The three-hour program of songs, dances and Vietnamese readings attracted about 150 people. The youth and project organizers wanted to show that not all Vietnamese teens are gang members and that they had something to offer the community. A second hope was to bring together Asian children and their parents. "The project is a way for the community to show the gifts local Vietnamese youths have to share; if they choose the right path and make the right decisions, they can go far and do a lot of great things. We lost such potential in the youth [involved in the massacre] and we don't want that to be something that we grieve over forever."

## Learning English as a Second Language

At an Eastern Washington school, teachers are discussing the recently released WASL scores of their predominantly English-language-learner students:

> *Cindi: Only 33.8 percent of our kids passed the listening part of the test. If kids aren't passing the listening test, how can we expect them to understand what they read? We work so hard and we are so hopeful, and then you see the test scores.*
>
> *Maria: Part of the problem is that third grade is a transitional year, where the ESL kids transfer into English only classes. The majority of kids in fourth grade are ESL. When kids reach the first level of proficiency, they are pushed right into English. Yes, they can do it on a basic level, but we expect them to use higher-order thinking skills. They are often barely reading at a basic level, and on the WASL, they have to draw conclusions and inferences. There is pressure to take tests. Some have only been here a year or two. We should look at the fourth-grade tests to compare with the seventh-grade tests—to show growth. We shouldn't focus on the fourth-grade tests.*
>
> *Cindi: But a lot of kids only use English with me, they don't use it out of school. Children aren't learning and using English. We need to start immersing them in English sooner. We're expecting them to do all their work in English in the fourth grade--syntax, endings, verb placement, adjectives, pronouns. It's the hardest thing. It breaks my heart.*
>
> *Sylvia: But kids do want to know English. Everything tells them to use English. The kids who are successfully transitioning into English-only classes are those who are proficient in their first language. We are transitioning what kids have. If they have the cognitive skills, yes, it does transfer—the critical thinking. It's not more English they need, it's language experience in their own language. We need to infuse deeper thinking, weave this through everything we're doing. As a building, we need to focus on language development, so they can think at a higher level—not just ESL kids, but all our kids need this.*
>
> *Michelle: Yes, language is in between thought and action. If you can't think, you can't talk, you certainly can't write.*

Conversations such as these are happening in classrooms all across America. State assessments have highlighted the higher risk of reading problems associated with lack of proficiency in English on school entry (NAEP, 1994). These difficulties are often compounded by poverty, low levels of parental education, lack of access to preschool programs, and poor schooling. For example, many immigrants from Latin America have limited formal education because only a fraction of the population of these countries has access to K-12 education (National Task Force on Minority High Achievement, 1999).

Many educators, like Cindi in the conversation above, view the problem as "lack of English:" speaking other languages is thought to interfere with the acquisition of English—the solution to the problem. Helen Malagon, supervisor of Washington's Transitional Bilingual Education program, observes:

> Because of the reform movement, teachers often want to teach English sooner, and because they don't understand the research, they can't support it. Many educators do not know the research; many are swayed by politics. The community inquires why we are teaching with non-English languages. Recently, I was talking with a parent. Her child's teacher had told her not to speak to her child in her native language at home. I asked the parent, "What other languages do you speak in the home?" And she replied, "I only speak Spanish." So basically, the teacher was telling her not to speak to her child!

Clearly, such well-intentioned advice can have serious consequences for the emotional, social, and cognitive development of linguistically diverse children. Researchers have found that a strong home language base actually facilitates children's second language learning and that literacy developed in the primary language transfers to the second language (Crawford, 1997; Thomas & Collier, 1997). "The reason is simple," says Krashen (1997), "Because we learn to read by reading, that is by making sense of what is on the page, it is easier to learn to read in a language we understand" (p. 1). The 1994 Bilingual Education Act is based on the principle that "proficient bilingualism is a desirable goal, which can bring cognitive, academic, cultural, and economic benefits to individuals and to the nation."

**The Refugee and Immigrant Forum of Snohomish County, Everett, WA**

Working closely with schools in two school districts, the Refugee and Immigrant Forum of Snohomish County provides mentoring and tutoring in the native language to a mix of immigrants from a number of countries, including Asia, Russia, Estonia, Georgia, Ethiopia, Cuba, and China. The Forum serves 2000 students Kindergarten through high school and provides workshops to acquaint teachers with their students' cultures, translation of school fliers for parents and parent-teacher conferences, and workshops for parents on how to work with their children's schools. When schools have received students from unfamiliar cultures, the Forum has identified individuals from that culture who could assist ESL teachers who work with these students. They have also added summer ESL classes at the request of the school. Because all of the tutors are immigrants, native speakers of the students' languages, and highly knowledgeable about students' families and the community, they help to connect academic and community experiences for students. The Forum was organized by local churches over twenty years ago and employs over a dozen full time staff and coordinates the work of volunteers who share students' languages. Evaluations show the drop-out rate for students who participate in the Forum's programs (25%) to be significantly less than those who do not (60%).

## Research on Bilingual Education

While methodologically rigorous evaluations of bilingual programs are rare, a number of studies have found that time invested in developing first language literacy works to the advantage of second language literacy development (Snow, Burns, and Griffin, 1998).

In a longitudinal study involving more than 700,000 students, Thomas and Collier (1997) found strong evidence of the greater effectiveness of two-way and late-exit bilingual education in relation to other program models. They found that *only* two-way developmental bilingual and late-exit program models succeeded in producing ELL achievement that reaches parity with that of native-English speakers.

The most successful bilingual programs appear to be those that emphasize and use children's primary (home) language; the proportion of English instruction increases gradually, from approximately 10 percent in kindergarten to 90 percent in fifth grade (Miner, 1999). Cummins (1986) suggests that "students' school success appears to reflect both the more solid cognitive/academic foundation developed through intensive primary language instruction and the reinforcement (rather than devaluation) of their cultural identity" (p. 25).

Helping children feel proud of their heritage was a frequent theme in our conversations with families. A mother of three children was outspoken: "I think our kids should maintain their home language, not forget their main language . . I tell my own kids don't even let somebody tell you that you cannot speak your own language. You stand up for what you feel and what you believe."

Many Mexican American teachers and parents who were interviewed spoke with emotion about their experiences of "being thrown into English-only classrooms." A mother of two children said, "It took a couple of years just to know what was going on. It was horrible; I missed a lot. I remember just sitting in class—not picking up on anything." A Mexican American elementary school teacher credits her decision to become a teacher to her first school experiences in this country:

> I became a teacher because with all the injustices I experienced, I knew I could teach better than that. Math was the only way to defend yourself—the only way to show you weren't dumb. I was an eight-year-old coming from a third-grade classroom in Mexico. I was put in a first-grade classroom because I didn't know anything. There were no teachers who had any background or experience in teaching a child who didn't know English.
>
> I was put in the back of the room with one child after another flashing flash cards at me. "This is garage." But I couldn't say garage. That's how I learned vocabulary—I couldn't do anything with it, but the children would take turns on me, so eventually the whole class would have a chance. I would sit there, and I would get tired. But each child would go get another. The teacher didn't know what to do with me. Each year it did get easier, but there were no accommodations done well at that time.

Fortunately, over the last decade, teaching practices have begun to reflect our growing understanding of how children learn a second language. There is substantial agreement among researchers on second-language learners that it is critically important that young children maintain and continue to develop their home language, while they are gaining proficiency in English (Tabors, 1998). Researchers have found:

- Young children who are forced to give up their primary language and adjust to an English-only environment may not only lose their first language, but may not learn the second language well (Wong-Fillmore, 1991).
- When children have only a partial command of two languages, they may mix both languages in what Selenker (1972) called "fossilized versions of inter-languages," rather than using fully formed versions of the target languages (Wong-Fillmore, 1991). While mixing languages may be only a temporary stage before full mastery of two languages, children in environments that do not support language development may not fully master either language. This inability to speak any language with proficiency puts children at high risk for school failure.
- The loss of the heritage language can seriously jeopardize children's relationships with their families, who may not be fluent in English. The inability to communicate with family members has serious consequences for the emotional, social, and cognitive development of linguistically diverse children (Cummins, 1999; Wolfe, 1992; Wong-Fillmore, 1991).
- Research on bilingual education shows that most children can pick up conversational or "playground" English in a year or two, but may need more time (from four to seven years) to master academic English, regardless of whether they take part in bilingual education programs or learn in English-only classrooms (Cummins, 1999; Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000; Thomas & Collier, 1997)
- Maintaining the home language does not interfere with the acquisition of a second language. Reinforcing children's conceptual base in their first language throughout elementary school (and beyond) provides a foundation for long-term growth in English skills (Cummins, 1999).
- In our increasingly global economy, people who speak, read, and write more than one language are in high demand. In addition, their skills enable them to contribute to and strengthen their own communities.

While providing cognitively complex, on-grade-level instruction in the first language is not always possible when multiple languages are present in a school community, teachers can communicate to children and parents that their language and culture are valued within the context of the school (Cummins, 1986). As Adel Nadeau, Humanities Director, San Diego Unified School District, notes, "Even though circumstances may limit the school's capacity to fully develop a student's primary language, there are always ways to nurture it"(1997). For example, teachers can learn as many words as possible in a linguistically diverse child's language, encourage children to teach the class a few words in their language, and provide bilingual signs around the classroom to convey to children and their families that their languages are valued. Color-coding the signs with a different color for each language draws children's attention to the different languages used in labeling.

### Stages of Second Language Learning

Learning a new language is a huge task, for both children and adults. While many educators believe that young children learn a new language with little effort, studies of the process reveal that mastering a new language takes time, perseverance, and support from adults and peers. Patton Tabors, professor and researcher from Harvard University, points out that children are building the language system from scratch, and, in a busy classroom, they are primarily doing it themselves, without the one-on-one attention they enjoyed as infants.

Tabors and Snow (1994) argue that when young children are learning a new language (after the first language is established), they go through four distinct stages. First, children use the home language. When it becomes clear that others do not understand him or her, children may enter a nonverbal period, a period in which they do not talk at all. While this can be frustrating for teachers, who may refer children for special educational services, or mistakenly interpret the silence as stubbornness or noncompliance, Tabors advises teachers to try to understand the child's point of view. She offers this analogy to help adults understand why a child might choose this option. "You have just won an all-expense paid trip to Tibet.

You get off the plane and enter a crowded airport. You are surrounded by unfamiliar people, sights, and sounds. Congratulations, you have just entered the nonverbal phase!" (Workshop, April, 1999).

After considerable practice, data gathering, and sound experimentation (a period that may last as long as a year), children may be ready to go public with a few individual words and memorized common phrases, such as "my turn," and "give it to me." Finally, children reach the stage of productive language use. In this stage children move from using a few formulaic patterns, such as "I wanna" coupled with names of objects (e.g., "I wanna paper"), to an understanding of the syntactic system of the language. At any stage, a child may use the strategies of an earlier stage. "Learning a second language is a cumulative process," explains Tabors. "It's highly volatile; at any point, a child might have it one minute and lose it the next. It's important for teachers to be aware of how a child feels, and provide lots of nonthreatening opportunities for the child to talk with adults and peers (Workshop, April, 1999).

### Structuring the Language-Learning Environment

By understanding the way children learn a first language, teachers can apply these principles to help children learn English. While until recently English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) methods of teaching had a strong skills orientation, current practices emphasize a whole language approach. ESL literature identifies attainment of communicative competence as the goal of instruction (Abramson, Seda, & Johnson, 1990).

With the recognition that language is best learned through actual use in a nonthreatening social context, language use is encouraged by focusing on meaning rather than correctness of form, regarding errors as part of the learning process (Abramson, et al., 1990). Like young children learning a first language, when children's communicative attempts are directly corrected, they may learn that it is better not to speak at all. Modeling the correct form and encouraging further communication help children gain proficiency without damaging their self-esteem.

Teachers can help children connect new words with meaning by using contextual cues, such as gestures, actions, pictures, and real objects. As Okagaki and Sternberg (1994) point out, for children with limited English skills, following teachers' directions and even "figuring out what to do to stay minimally out of trouble is an enormous task" (p. 18). While Anglo teachers typically value the decontextualized "text" over the context, Delpit (1995) observes that other groups, such as Native Alaskans, Native Americans, and African Americans, place a far greater value on context. In a classroom setting, while an Anglo teacher frequently directs children to do something while he or she is engaged in a different task, other cultural groups typically match words with actions.

For example, if a Native American teacher says, "Copy the words," she is at the blackboard pointing. Delpit (1995) points out, "The Anglo teacher asks the children to attend to what he *says*, not what he does; the Native American teacher, on the other hand, supports her words in a related physical context. What gets *done* is at least as important as what gets said" (p. 98). To help linguistically diverse children feel secure and competent in the classroom setting, as well as to promote English proficiency, teachers should learn to provide as many cues as possible to aid understanding.

Tabors (1998) points out that "high-pressure situations—such as being called on in front of a group—can make even the most confident second-language learners unable to communicate effectively" (p. 23). Rowe (1986) found that providing ample time for children to answer questions increased the number and quality of responses for all children. Increasing the "wait time" from the usual one second or less to three or more seconds can provide needed time for children not only to reflect on their answers but also to form their words in a second language. Children may need to rehearse their response by first saying the words to themselves or in a low voice, before saying them out loud.

In the preschool and early elementary years, learning centers—art, blocks, manipulatives, sand and water play, dramatic play—provide a place where children can use and develop competencies other than language. These centers serve as "safe havens" where second-language learners can watch and listen until they are ready to join in (Tabors, 1998).

Using predictable books, poems, chants, and songs that include repetition of phrases helps children learn vocabulary and knowledge of story structure within enjoyable activities. Poetry and songs are fun to memorize and can last a lifetime. Unusual vocabulary and complex word structures are often taken in stride when they appear in songs and poetry. In *Wally's Stores* (1981), Paley describes a five-year-old Japanese girl who was not comfortable with the other children in her classroom and was afraid to speak English. But through memorizing lines from fairy tales, which she "carried around like gifts, bestowing them on children in generous doses," Akemi began to conquer English:

> "I am the wishing bird," she said, flying gracefully into the doll corner. "I wish for a golden crown," Jill responded, whereupon Akemi delicately touched her head with an invisible wand.
>
> Adults who go about quoting poetry seldom receive encouragement, but the children rewarded Akemi by repeating her phrases and motions. She correctly interpreted this as friendship. Whenever a child copied her, Akemi would say, "Okay. You friend of me" (p. 124).

Through the magic of fairy tales, Paley reports that Akemi progressed from memorizing phrases, to telling imaginative and complex stories, to acting out stories, in a remarkably short time.

Wong-Filmore (1985) recommends a number of steps that teachers can use to engage their students in meaningful activities that require the use of language:

- Use demonstrations, modeling, and role-playing
- Present new information in the context of known information
- Paraphrase often
- Use simple structures, avoid complex structures
- Repeat the same sentence patterns and routines
- Tailor questions for different levels of language competence and participation

### Styles of Discourse and Literacy

> *Joe Lomack [a Yup'ik elder] and I conversed according to the eccentricities of his English. He seldom made assertions, except to explain that a person who went out on the tundra might "get dead." He told stories, and from the stories I was expected to infer theory. Joe had no interest in the bluntness of mere expositions; he made daily life into a series of fables, history into story, the world into an epic seen and not seen: literature* (Shorris, 2000)

Although bilingual and bicultural children have the potential to enrich the classroom environment with diverse ways of seeing and understanding, their discourse and literacy styles are often seen as a liability. Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins, 1988) cite the observations of a child who came to Canada from Hong Kong: "English style is very different from my style. English people do not like sentences to go around and around and the idea must be clear, but in our tradition, we tend to go around and around, and then at last the focus becomes narrower and narrower" (p. 36). It is likely that many teachers might see this narrative style as inferior to the topic-centered, linear style favored in Anglo classrooms and attempt to "fix" the problem by requiring the culturally favored approach.

Research by Michaels and Collins (cited in Bowers & Flinders, 1990) in an urban first-grade classroom provides an example of the taken-for-granted beliefs that may lead teachers to misinterpret the performance of culturally diverse students. During sharing time, White students followed and were reinforced for the expected pattern of storytelling: "a topic-centered, focused, explicit description of single events with a linear pattern of development" (p. 17). The African American students, however, used a pattern of presentation that used anecdotal associations and paralinguistic cues that were not understood by the teacher.

This style "made it difficult for the teacher to understand what the students were saying, as their accounts did not seem to have beginnings, middle, or ends" (p. 17). Because the teacher did not understand the topic-associating style, she would attempt to get the students to state the topic and to connect information together in an explicit and linear manner. Although she eventually instituted a guideline that stated that "sharing would involve telling about only 'one thing,'" (p. 18), all her attempts were both disruptive to the students' presentations and ineffective in helping the African American students to understand what she wanted.

An example cited by Delpit (1995) has a similar beginning but a happier ending. She cites the work of a teacher-researcher in Wyoming who was concerned that many of the stories that her Arapaho students wrote "didn't seem to 'go anywhere.'" The teacher wrote:

> The stories just ambled along with no definite start or finish, no climaxes or conclusions. I decided to ask Pius Moss (the school elder) about these stories, since he is a master Arapaho storyteller himself. I learned about a distinctive difference between Arapaho stories and stories I was accustomed to hearing, reading, and telling. Pius Moss explained that Arapaho stories are not written down, they're told in what we might call serial form, continued night after night. A "good" story is one that lasts several nights.
>
> When I asked Pius Moss why Arapaho stories never seem to have an "ending," he answered that there is no ending to life, and stories are about Arapaho life, so there is no need for conclusion. My colleagues and I talked about what Pius had said, and we decided that we would encourage our students to choose whichever type of story they wished to write: we would try to listen and read in appropriate ways (p. 62).

Utilizing the expertise of teachers, parents, and other community members of diverse cultural and linguistic groups can do much to counter the deeply held and often unconscious biases that guide our behavior and that may cause us to value only one way of talking, understanding, and behaving. Children and teachers of the dominant culture can learn from children from diverse cultures, enhancing their own lives and their ability to "become citizens of the global community" (Delpit, 1995, p. 69).

**Dialect.** Teachers often insist on remediating the dialect of African American, Native American, and Alaskan American students. Many researchers and educators, however, contend that constant correction can have a damaging effect on children's self-esteem, attitude toward school, and ability and motivation to learn to read and speak standard English (Delpit, 1995; Cummins, 1986). When teachers model respect and acceptance of children for who they are, children are much more likely to identify with teachers as role models and want to emulate their styles of speech and behavior. Delpit (1995) provides this example from a Mississippi preschool, where a teacher had been "drilling her three-and four-year-old students on responding to the greeting, 'Good morning, how are you?' with 'I'm fine, thank you." Posting herself near the door one morning, she greeted a four-year-old Black boy in an interchange that went something like this:

| | |
|---|---|
| Teacher: | Good morning, Tony, how are you? |
| Tony: | I be's fine. |
| Teacher: | Tony, I said, How are you? |
| Tony: | (with raised voice) I be's *fine*. |
| Teacher: | No, Tony, I said *how are you?* |
| Tony: | (angrily) I done told you, *I be's fine* and I ain't telling you no more! (p. 51) |

Delpit (1995) points out that it is unlikely that Tony will want to identify with this teacher, who is as unpleasant as she is inscrutable. Yet children like Tony may experience many such invalidating and confusing attempts to make them conform to standard English, both in literacy instruction and everyday conversation. Delpit (1995) sites a reading instruction exercise used by a professor to demonstrate the devastating effects on students of the constant correction of their communication styles. Having observed a number of such teaching routines, he incorporated the teacher behaviors into a reading instruction exercise that he used with students in a college class.

He "put together sundry rules from a number of American social and regional dialects to create what he called the language of Atlantis. When they made errors he interrupted them, using some of the same comments he had heard elementary school teachers routinely make to their students" (p. 60). The results were "rather shocking":

By the time these Ph.D. candidates in English or linguistics had read 10-20 words, I could make them sound totally illiterate. By using the routines that teachers use of dialectically different students, I could produce all of the behaviors we observe in children who do not learn to read successfully. The first thing that goes is sentence intonation: They sound like they are reading a list from the telephone book. Comment on their pronunciation a bit more, and they begin to sub-vocalize, rehearsing pronunciations for themselves before they dare to say them out loud . . . They begin to guess at pronunciations . . . They switch letters around for no reason. They stumble, they repeat. In short, when I attack them for their failure to conform to my demands for Atlantis English pronunciations, they sound very much like the worst of the second-graders in any of the classrooms I have observed (p. 60).

Clearly, as this exercise shows, constant correction is an ineffective and damaging way to help children learn standard English. But don't children need to learn the language and discourse styles of the dominant culture in order to be successful?

Effective educators of cultural diverse children propose that children who use different dialects and have different styles of discourse and literacy should *add* new patterns, while their cultural style is supported and validated (Cummins, 1986; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995). "We need to help kids understand that it's Ok to speak this way in their homes but in order to progress in the society, they need to speak standard English," says Liz Flynn. "We need to show kids how to write a formal paper, help them understand the difference between formal and informal dress and voice."

**Strategies that work.** Helping children to become aware of the speech patterns of various cultural groups, comparing and contrasting styles, is an effective way to expose children to alternative forms and to provide opportunities to practice them in a nonthreatening environment. In addition, all children are helped to realize the value and fun of knowing different ways to talk (Boutte & McCormick, 1992). Following are some strategies that have been identified by two well-known African American educators, Lisa Delpit and Gloria Ladson-Billings:

- In the sixth-grade classroom of Ann Lewis, students were permitted to express themselves in language (in speaking and writing) with which they are knowledgeable and comfortable. "They were then required to "translate" to the standard form. By the end of the year, the students were not only facile at this 'code-switching,' but could better use both languages" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 161).
- For younger children, discussions about the differences in the ways television characters from different cultural groups speak can provide a starting point. A collection of the many children's books written in the dialects of various cultural groups and audiotaped stories narrated by individuals from different cultures provide authentic ways to learn about linguistic diversity (Delpit, 1995, p. 54).

- Mrs. Pat, a teacher chronicled by Shirley Brice Heath, had her students become language "detectives," interviewing a variety of individuals and listening to the radio and television to discover the differences and similarities in the ways people talked Delpit, 1995, p. 54).
- Native Alaskan teacher Martha Demientieff helps her students understand "boo.. language" by contrasting the "wordy," academic way of speaking and writing with the metaphoric style of their heritage language, where they say a great deal with a few words. Students work individually, in pairs, or in groups to write papers with enough words "to sound like a book." They then take these papers and try to reduce the meaning to a few sentences. Finally, students further reduce the meaning to a "saying" brief enough to go on the front of a T-shirt, and the sayings are put on little paper T-shirts that the students cut out and hang throughout the room (Delpit, 1995, p. 62).
- Demientieff also analyzes her students' writings for what has been referred to as Village English and fills half a bulletin board with these words, labeling it, "Our Heritage Language." On the other half of the bulletin board she puts an equivalent statement under the label, "Formal English." She and the students spend a long time on the "Heritage English," savoring the nuances and discussing how good it feels.

  Then, she turns to the other side of the board and explains that there are people who will judge them by the way they talk or write, and that in order to get jobs, they will need to talk like "those people who only know and can only really listen to one way." She affirms that although they will have to learn two ways of talking, they will always know their Heritage English is best. She compares Formal English to a formal dinner and Heritage English to a picnic. The students then prepare a formal dinner in the class; they dress up, use fancy tablecloths, china, and silverware, and speak only formal English. Then they prepare a picnic where only informal English is allowed (Delpit, p. 41).
- Teachers who do not share the culture and languages of their students can ask students to "teach" the teacher and other students aspects of their language. They can "translate" songs, poems, and stories into their own dialect or into "book language" and compare the differences across the cultural groups represented in the classroom (Delpit, 1995, p. 54).

## Conclusion

"Language," writes Nieto (1996) "is inextricably linked to culture. It is a primary means by which people express their cultural values and the lens through which they view the world." In a caring learning community, teachers help bridge the gap between home and school by acknowledging and nurturing the cultural and linguistic knowledge of all children. In order to do so, school staff must create a culturally sensitive environment that is both a responsive *and* challenging, an environment in which children's multiple intelligences are recognized and nourished. Narrow, culturally biased definitions of "readiness," "giftedness," and school success track and label children; low expectations restrict their opportunities and ability to learn. Schools, informed by families and the community, can broaden their definitions of learning and expectations for school success, enhancing the quality of life for all concerned.

On the Kitsap Peninsula within the Puget Sound, the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe is working to improve communication between the school and S'Klallam parents, and has chosen to make education a priority within their own community.

## Building Bridges: The Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe

> *Teachers need to be brought into a circle of awareness. They need to be willing to learn about culture and the tribe needs to support it.*(Dianna Purser, 2000)

The concerns that the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe has for its students' school achievement are similar to those of many Native American tribes: low graduation rates, low standardized test scores, and high rates of placement in remedial classes. Because of these concerns, the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe has been proactively building bridges for their children's education through a three-pronged approach of negotiating with school officials, advocating for parents, and providing support for tribal students.

### Education Summits

Over the course of the last year, the tribe has reached out to the school district to engage both communities in a process of negotiations, known as the Building Bridges education summits. Ted George, tribal elder and member of the tribal education committee, describes the process:

> Our six years of dialogue with the schools may now be taking form and substance. We are hopeful that both the schools and tribe can mutually craft strategies and ventures to improve the educational environment and achievement of our children.
>
> My Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe has brought the entire school board, administration, key program directors, [principals, vice principals, the special education department, teachers,] Tribal Council, its education staff, and tribal parents together for the first time in history. We are aware of the complexity, time, and leadership we feel must be present as we formally prepare for the implementation of our work. We are committed to improvements. This means awareness, involvement, advocacy, ownership, and accountability by the tribe, its education staff, and parents.

Sheryl Scott of the tribe's Career and Education Development office further emphasizes that the education summits have come about "due to the tribe's continued challenging of the district to provide the best, most equitable, most efficient and culturally relevant education our children deserve and are entitled to receive."

In its effort to find ways to make its concerns known to the school district, the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe has relied heavily on the utilization of the federal Impact Aid program. Impact Aid is a federal program that provides financial assistance to local school districts that have small property tax revenue bases due to the presence of tax-exempt federal property in their district (e.g., military bases or Indian reservations). It is also designed to ensure equal participation of Indian children in the education programs of their schools and to encourage communication between the schools and the Indian community (more information on Impact Aid is available on the World Wide Web at www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/ImpactAid). The tribe credits the involvement of the Office of Civil Rights in helping to enforce the Impact Aid requirement that tribal officials and parents of Indian children have the opportunity to give their feedback on the education of Indian children.

By bringing school and tribal representatives together at these summits, the tribe hopes to build better relationships in order to create a mutual understanding between the two groups of what needs to be done to raise academic achievement and prevent school drop out. By the third summit, aspirations, barriers, concerns, and problem statements had been written and discussed. Communication at the summits has been candid and forthright, with each participant talking about his or her perceptions and experiences. The impacts of racism, cultural differences, learning styles, teaching strategies, professional development, and the use of a multicultural curriculum are all being considered. The improvements in communication and understanding have been encouraging, but problems continue to exist. As the summits continue and an action plan is created, tribal members maintain that they want to see changes in how Native American students are treated and educated, in addition to healthier and more frequent communication between the district and the tribe.

### Advocating for Parents and Children and Their Culture

The Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, like many other tribes, is increasingly working to protect the sovereign rights guaranteed in treaties in exchange for giving up much of the tribal land to the Europeans. Tribes enjoy a direct government-to-government relationship with the U.S. government wherein no decisions about their lands and people are to be made without their consent, and where state and local governments have little authority over the sovereign tribal nations. Rights guaranteed through such treaties as compensation for the loss of land often included access to Native Americans' usual hunting and fishing lands. Family advocate Dianna Purser suggests that a better understanding by non-natives of native people and their history would help to improve relationships between people:

> The treaties are binding agreements from a government-to-government relationship. Just as the Canadian agreement with the Canadian border is in existence, we have a treaty agreement with that country. We have a treaty agreement with Mexico; we have a treaties with all of these other nations. If children are taught at an early age that Native American treaties are the same binding contracts, government to government contracts as these other treaties, and what these agreements involve, then they can develop a respect for that. If, instead of trying to do away with the treaties like they're something that just can be done away with, children had real information and respect, I don't think they would grow up to be adults who have this disrespectful attitude. They would have a better understanding of Indian people and realize that Indian people are not going to be assimilated like other cultures. We want to maintain our culture. That is the bottom line.

The Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe has faced a number of legal cases challenging its fishing rights. Members fear that there is a backlash that has extended into the classroom, affecting children's ability to learn. According to tribal members, racial tensions take their toll on children's concentration and feelings of safety, and affect parents' attitudes toward the school. Purser observes:

> It puts a real hardship on Indian kids—the day-to-day interactions. It leads to diminished feelings of self-esteem. When children are afraid, it takes away the joy of learning.

Historically, the role of schooling in purging Native American culture and language has led children and their parents to disengage from the school environment, leading to school failure. Purser expresses the pain that parents feel and suggests that both the tribe and the schools have a role in helping to heal it: "We have Native American and African American history weeks, but not ongoing respect for the culture. Tribes have to reestablish that education is important. We have to reconnect. Parents have dropped out, and they are weeping because their kids have shut down."

Parents who wish to ask questions or engage in discussion with school staff can often feel that their voices do not matter. One parent of two children is familiar with parents' disappointments in trying to work with the school: "It's frustrating because they don't feel like the schools are listening, not listening to them about what would be best for their students sometimes. You know they know their own child; yet the school refuses to listen or do anything sometimes."

To address these types of issues, the tribe has worked to prepare disenfranchised parents to work with the school and ensure fair treatment by conducting parent advocacy training. The tribe brought in a consultant to walk parents through an Individual Education Program (IEP) meeting, discussing what to expect and what rights they have. Purser notes how the training helped parents to gain confidence and be more meaningfully involved:

> It was a very empowering and positive experience for parents. It gave them a feeling of involvement. They had been intimidated, but now they know that parents do have rights. They can take people with them who will advocate for them. The tribe has taken huge steps—there are similar concerns on many reservations. Now when their children are suspended, they can call the tribe, and one of us goes with them to the school. There has been a very positive response from parents; parents are more aware of their children's education and of their rights.

### Supporting Children's Education

In addition to efforts to improve communication between the school and S'Klallam parents, the tribe has chosen to make education a priority within its own community. A large portion of the tribal budget is devoted to funding a preschool, GED classes, and onsite courses through Northwest Indian College and Evergreen College. The tribe sponsors a homework club for children of all ages, with tutors from the local naval base.

The new "All Stars" program seeks to recognize on a monthly basis elementary children who have shown good attendance and assignment completion rates. The children are treated to a meal, given a small toy, and presented with a certificate. Parents come to congratulate the proud students. Purser explains, "We've found that recognition and monthly incentives are really good in helping the children stay focused on themselves and their success, and to get parents involved."

The tribe has also played a more active role in encouraging neighborhoods to work together. A contest was set up where each cul-de-sac on the reservation competes as a team. The families in whichever cul-de-sac that shows the best attendance and assignment completion rates at the end of the school year will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to the Tacoma FunPlex. Purser describes the aim of the contest:

> The goal is to promote family involvement and child participation in education. The activities also serve to encourage neighborhood residents to help each other with their study skills. Parents are learning how to really advocate for their children, developing positive parenting skills, and promoting their children's educational success. It seems to be really paying off.

According to one parent, the tribe has encouraged parents to get more involved through this initiative. "They say that we should get out into our neighborhood and make sure that we check on the kids, that we should say to each kid, 'Hey, how are you doing in school and your homework? Do you need any help?'"

Within the local schools, tribal members are using the resources they have to teach Native American culture to both native and non-native children. Native American instructors in the Indian Education Program at David Wolfle Elementary School, use several avenues to teach children about Native American culture within and outside of the classroom. One instructor has started a dance group to teach children S'Klallam language songs and dances that he used to do when he was young. He leads student visits to the tribal arts center or the longhouse that is being built by the tribe. "A lot of people didn't know that the S'Klallam reservation is only five miles away, and there are so many things to offer there. All the culture, the clothing, the artist we have on the reservation, nobody knows that," he states.

One arena where the school has made strong efforts to include Native American communities and their culture is through their Family Literacy Nights (see sidebar in Chapter V). The location of these events alternates between the school and the tribal center, which has helped to make Native American parents more comfortable in attending and has brought many non-natives to the reservation for the first time. One recent event was focused on Native American storytelling. Several tribal members told stories to the families and read storybooks written by S'Klallam people and that use S'Klallam language.

### Aspirations for Children

A particular strength and source of pride of the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe is the reservation community. As the two-square-mile reservation was established relatively late in 1936, the community members decided that they would collectively own the reservation land, sharing responsibility for the land and access to the beaches. This is a very unique land ownership, compared to many other reservations, which are held in trust by the U.S. government or have been allotted to individual owners. Reservations that were allotted to individual owners often resulted in the loss of more land when many Indians were forced to sell their land, often to non-Indians.

The tribe's efforts toward improving education illustrate members' hopes for their children's future. Tribal members express renewed interest in restoring parts of their culture that were taken away. Elders urge children to stay in school and pursue higher education. George expresses his vision for a strengthened community:

> Indian people are getting a second chance in life, to identify their interests and talents. Traditional cultures are based on a village concept. We provide natural support for each other. We need to reestablish communal Indian cultures, reestablish concern for one another. We need to create our own industries. We have to walk a fine line. Our role is to try and use issues in a positive way. We have to pose problems as learning opportunities. Something better will come out of it.

# Chapter V

## Learning To Read And Write

> *There is no doubt in my mind that many children are disabled by the ways in which they are taught to read and write. When we break the intimate connection between experience and learning, children are cut off from their own problem-solving abilities. We sever the link between their lives and their learning, and they suffer as a consequence.*(Taylor, 1993)

> *When learners see their own experiences as valid knowledge and use reading and writing for their own purposes, the journey toward literate behaviors is soundly under way.*(Dahl & Freppon, 1995)

The first day of kindergarten is an important event in a child's development. While most children enter "real school" with a mixture of excitement and apprehension, they usually expect to enjoy school and are confident that they will be successful. However, research shows that some children's liking for school declines steadily as they progress through each grade, as does their academic self-image. Failure begins early, and by third grade, educational outcomes may already be limited (Bowman & Stott, 1994; Entwisle, 1995).

The Unity Project goal of helping all children to read at grade level by grade three reflects the widespread understanding that school success depends, in large part, on how successful children are in learning to read (Boyer, 1995). As a Northwest principal stated, "Literacy is the main thrust; everything revolves around it. Without it, children can't do math, they can't function." Failing to master this critical competency in the first three years of formal schooling often has a profound effect on academic success. Slavin and his colleagues conclude that while success in the early years does not guarantee success throughout the school years and beyond, "failure in the early grades does virtually guarantee failure in later schooling" (1993, p. 11).

While this conclusion undoubtedly reflects the realities of today's schools, it is important to note that with effective instruction and support, children of all ages can learn to become confident, competent readers and writers. Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, and Hurwitz observe:

> The assumption that children who have not become good readers in the early grades will never catch up is both incorrect and destructive. Further, the comparison assumption that children who learn to read well in those early years have no need of further reading instruction is also misguided (1999, p. 6).

But success—or failure—in learning to read does not begin in kindergarten. Research has confirmed what many parents and educators have suspected: literacy development has a long history, beginning in the first interactions between children and their caregivers. In 1966, New Zealand educator Marie Clay coined the term "emergent literacy" to describe the literacy development of young children. Learning to read and write, rather than mastering a series of predetermined readiness skills, begins early in life and is an ongoing process.

Grounded in cognitive psychology and linguistics, the emergent literacy perspective has highlighted the importance of early experiences with oral and written language for literacy development. It is now well-known that the ability to listen to and tell stories in the preschool years is strongly related to learning to read (National Reading Research Council, 1998, cited in Steinberg, 1998). There is a great deal of evidence that children who come from families who place a high value on literacy tend to be early and competent readers. Schickedanz (1986, pp. 38-39) notes that by the time such children enter school, they have already learned the following:

1. **How books work:** Books printed in English are read from front to back, left to right, and top to bottom.
2. **Print should make sense:** The discovery that words are placed together in meaningful ways is fundamental to learning to read.
3. **Print and speech are related in a specific way:** Storybooks provide many different samples of print for children to practice matching speech to print.
4. **Book language differs from speech:** "Written language, unlike oral language, must carry the total load of meaning without ambiguity. It is more formal, more complete, and more textured than spoken language. . . ." (Holdaway, 1979, p. 54).
5. **Books are enjoyable:** Positive feelings toward reading help children read often and for pleasure, persevering even when frustrated by a difficult text.
6. **Patterns of interacting characteristic of behaviors expected in a school setting:** Children gain confidence and competence when they can relate their knowledge to the school setting.

It is easy to see why children who enter school with these competencies are at a distinct advantage compared with children who have little experience with books. In *Beginning to Read* (1990), Marilyn Adams estimates that the typical middle-class child enters first grade with 1,000 to 1,700 hours of one-on-one picture-book reading, while the corresponding child from a low-income family averages 25 such hours. "Is there any chance," she asks, "that the first-grade teacher can make up for that difference in 360 hours of one-on-20 instruction?"

Experience with storybook reading not only enhances print recognition and familiarity with stories, but the child-centered conversations that often accompany reading aloud help children develop a rich oral language vocabulary. Recent research has demonstrated a strong correlation between proficiency in oral language and success in reading and writing. In fact, the amount and quality of verbal interaction engaged in by caregivers and children is the strongest predictor of literacy (Phillips, 1987). Speaking, listening, reading, and writing are all aspects of literacy and develop in an interdependent manner. Problems with language are believed by some to be at the heart of the difficulties many low-income children encounter in school.

### Books and Babies Shower, Nespelem Elementary

"Finding ways to spread the word and get parents of newborns to understand how important it is to spend time with their children and read and talk to their baby is critical," says reading specialist Judy Sprankle. "We needed a forum that would allow us to get this information to parents in a very comfortable setting so that they could just hear it, take information, take materials, and then decide for themselves how they would use these in the home." Nespelem Elementary's approach was a baby shower for parents of infants up to 18 months of age.

In addition to traditional shower activities such as cake, refreshments, games and prizes, parents and teachers discuss the kinds of language experiences that can help prepare children for school. Each parent chooses five books to take home with them and receives crayons, pencils, and a T-shirt for their child that states, "I love books and Nespelem School loves me."

Childcare is provided for the infants and their siblings and the local WIC program has volunteered to provide transportation to those who need it. WIC and the tribal newspaper also help to advertise the event.

Those who have attended have appreciated hearing about the importance of reading and talking to their children and learning about books. "When parents have a newborn, it's a very exciting time in their lives and their baby's life. So I think it's a really key time to link up with them. Some of these children we may never see in our school, however, I think that what we're doing is very valuable for the community as a whole. No matter where these children go they need to be educated and they need a solid foundation in literacy."

## Poverty and Early Language Learning

By many measures of growth, unemployment, and low inflation, the country is enjoying its best days since the 1960s, many analysts say. Yet the prosperity enjoyed by many is not shared by all. Among one of the lowest rates in the country, 11 percent of Washington's children lived below the poverty level in 1998, down from 15 percent in 1993 (Bennett & Lu, 2000). However, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, far more children of color live in families with incomes below the poverty level. The average family income of Hispanic, African American, and Native American families is $20,000 to $23,000 per year, about one-third below the average White family income of $37,000 (Washington Kids Count, 2000). Furthermore, more than half of adults of color with household income below about $24,000 per year have paid work (Washington Kids Count, 2000).

Most children lacking health insurance belong to the poorest fifth of Washington's households. Lack of health insurance affects children of color at twice the rate of White children (12 percent versus 6 percent, respectively). One in six (17 percent) Hispanic and Native American children are not covered by health insurance; 8 percent of Asian or Pacific Islander children and 6 percent of African American children are uninsured (Washington Kids Count, 2000).

While being poor does not inevitably lead to problems in school, poverty's adverse effects on children and families have been well documented. Poverty gives rise to many types of deprivation and increases the likelihood that numerous risk factors are present simultaneously: in parents, child, health care, housing, support systems, schools, child care, and neighborhoods.

Due to the interaction of multiple risk factors, children from poor families are disproportionately at risk for school failure.

Nationally, poor children are three times more likely to drop out of school and poor teen girls are five-and-a-half times more likely to become teen mothers (Children First for Oregon, 1994). It is important to note that most low-income parents provide nurturing environments for their children's development, despite the difficulties presented by living in poverty. In addition, although White middle-class Americans place a high value on the decontextualized, abstract written word, other ethnic groups and social classes may encourage the development of other intelligences, including oral language, aesthetic, musical, and kinesthetic literacy. A study conducted in an elementary school in Charlotte, North Carolina (Stone, 1992), found that 64 percent of children were either tactile or kinesthetic learners, compared to only 21 percent who were primarily auditory learners, and 20 percent who were visual learners.

In addition, many children from diverse cultural backgrounds, who may also be poor, have a great deal of knowledge and language competence that goes unrecognized by teachers who are predominantly White and middle class. Thus, differences in verbal interaction and narrative styles may be interpreted as deficits (Delpit, 1995) (See Chapter IV). Delpit points out that teacher education usually focuses on research that links failure and socioeconomic status, failure and cultural difference, and failure and single-parent households. "It is hard to believe that these children can possibly be successful after teachers have been so thoroughly exposed to so much negative indoctrination" (p. 172).

Teachers, then, can do much to ameliorate the difficulties often experienced by children from low-income families by having high expectations for all children and by examining their own biases and beliefs regarding children living in poverty. If schools are to meet the needs of all children, they must build on the strengths, experience, and competencies that children bring to school, encouraging and providing opportunities for children to use their multiple intelligences.

**Characteristics of Children Who Are "Ready" To Read**

Book experience beginning in infancy develops the following skills:

- They know books are a source of pleasure
- They have acquired "book language" both for their understanding and their oral use
- They are familiar with written symbols (letters, words, punctuation marks) and begin to experiment with them in their writing
- They have begun to understand direction and position in print (left to right, top to bottom)
- They are able to listen for long periods of time as the plot of a story unfolds
- They use their imagination and their experience to visualize as a story is read

Source: *Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS)* from the Central Kitsap School District

## Differences in Early-Language-Learning Environments

There is no question that reading at a proficient level is essential for children to be successful in school and beyond. Learning to read is, in fact, the top priority in elementary education (Boyer, 1995). Research on brain development has helped to clarify the vital role that caregiver-child interactions play in both oral and written language development. This research has provided striking physiological evidence that validates what many educators and parents have long suspected: the day-to-day interactions between young children and their social and physical environment directly affect the architecture of the brain.

Developmental psychologists agree that the optimal environment for stimulating language development is one of responsiveness to and acceptance of the child's communicative attempts. By responding to infants' babbles, coos, and smiles as if they are meaningful and including children in conversations long before they say their first words, parents help children to become confident and competent language learners.

In contrast, a parenting style that relies on directives, direct teaching, and teaching by imitation has been associated with lower language functioning (Snow, Dubber, & Blauw, 1982). In a longitudinal study, Tough (1982) found that it is precisely this parenting style that is prevalent among low-income families. The majority of the talk of middle-class mothers falls into the *reflexive* or *associative* category. For example, a middle-class mother might say, "Please get off the counter because I'm afraid you might fall." In contrast, the talk of disadvantaged mothers falls more frequently into the *categorical* category of speech, for example, "I'm telling you to get down now. Do it because I said so."

Parents who respond to their children's interests in various aspects of the world, helping them to observe, compare, reflect, predict, empathize, and reason, are offering their children experience in the ways in which parents think (Tough, 1982). But parents may actively discourage thinking and hinder the development of curiosity and interest in the world. Hart and Risley (1992) found that low socioeconomic status (SES) children frequently experience a language-impoverished environment, receiving substantially less parenting per hour than children in middle-class families, and that these differences were strongly correlated with subsequent IQ measures of the children.

In addition, a substantial proportion of parent utterances to children functioned to prohibit children's activities. These investigators found a significant inverse relationship between the rate of prohibitions and children's IQ. They concluded that the strong relationship between even low prohibitions and unfavorable child outcomes suggests that prohibitions have a toxic effect on children's speech development.

In *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Lives of Young American Children*, Hart and Risley (1995) discuss the findings of their longitudinal study on language development in three different types of families: welfare, working class, and professional. All of the families in their study adequately met their children's needs for health, safety, and affection and were considered "well functioning." Yet considerable differences in the amount and quality of parent-child interactions were recorded. In professional families, more than 80 percent of the feedback to 13- to 18-month-old children was affirmative. However, in families with parents on welfare, more than 80 percent of the feedback to children of this age was negative. The researchers note:

> A consistent and pervasive negative feedback tone was the model for the children of how families work together. Given the strong relationships shown in the longitudinal data between the prevalence of prohibitions in the first years of life and lowered child accomplishments, lasting still at age nine, the prospects for the next generation of welfare children seem bleak (p. 178).

It is not only the *quality* of the language-learning environment that is different for many poor children. The *amount* of verbal interaction between parents and their children varies greatly by social class. Farran and Ramey (1980) found that middle-class mothers increased their involvement with their infants from six to 20 months, whereas many low-income mothers decreased their involvement. In a longitudinal study conducted by Farran and Haskins (cited in Farran & Ramey, 1980), middle-class mothers played with their three-year-olds twice as much as low-income mothers.

Hart (1982) found that although the language of poor children displayed as great a variety and complexity as middle-class children, they used complex structures less frequently. In addition, poor children added new words and structures more slowly than advantaged children. The result was "a cumulative, ever-widening gap between the size of the lexicon in use by children in poverty vs. advantaged children" (p. 209).

In their longitudinal study, Hart and Risley (1995) extrapolated from their data on the number of words per hour heard by children in the three types of families they studied. They concluded that by age three, the children in professional families would have heard more than 30 million words, the children in working-class families 20 million, and the children in welfare families 10 million. These differences are correlated with differences in vocabulary growth rate, vocabulary use, and IQ test scores. Multiple-regression analysis showed that race made no contribution to child accomplishments over and above parenting style. These studies show that well before the age of three, children's language development is on a path that greatly influences further learning. As Hart and Risley (1995) note, "The amount and diversity of children's past experience influence which new opportunities for experience they notice and choose" (p. 194).

White, Graves, and Slater (1990) conducted comparison studies of vocabulary growth among three groups of children, from first through fourth grade. The groups were each composed of students from one or three schools: a White suburban school; an inner-city, predominantly African American school where students spoke an English dialect; and a semirural school with dialect-speaking, economically disadvantaged Asian Pacific students. The vocabulary size of first-graders in these three groups ranged from 5,000 words for the White students, to 3,500 words for the urban students, and 2,5000 for the Asian Pacific students. Despite intensive vocabulary and decoding instruction, the vocabulary gap never closed (although the students in all three groups increased their vocabulary sizes considerably) (cited in St. Charles and Constantino, 2000).

Because lack of experience may be confused with lack of ability, children who enter school with limited vocabulary due to few experiences with child-centered conversations, books, stories, and print are often labeled as delayed, unready, or of limited ability (Allington, 1994). Children from low-SES families, in particular, may be viewed as deficient in language and other basic skills. To remedy these deficiencies, curricula for poor children are frequently organized around discrete skills taught in a linear sequence.

Although children who learn skills in isolation may successfully memorize the alphabet and improve their handwriting abilities, these activities often do little to engender an appreciation of reading, build vocabulary and concept formation, or help children express themselves through language. In fact, by being required to participate in activities that have little meaning or intrinsic value, children may lose their initial enthusiasm for reading and writing.

## Fourth-Grade Slump

Research strongly supports the importance of some explicit phonemic awareness instruction, particularly for children who have had little exposure to reading and writing. Despite vast differences in children's language experiences, by concentrating on specific decoding skills and observable behaviors, schools have been successful in establishing a minimum literacy level for most children (Squire, 1983). Because the ability to recognize printed letters and to sound out words is often the focus of reading instruction, children who have had few experiences with reading and writing in the preschool years often score at grade level or above on standardized tests in grade two.

However, reading achievement often begins to decline between grades four and six, a phenomenon often referred to as the "fourth-grade slump." In particular, below-average readers who also come from low-SES families tend to decelerate earlier and to a greater extent, dropping further and further behind their grade expectations (Chall, 1969; 1983). Chall and Jacobs (1983) reported that children in their study "had a good start in word meaning in grade two, but this competency was first to go into an early and strong deceleration" (p. 623).

### Washington Reading Corps

The Washington Reading Corps is a group of 200 schools statewide committed to helping struggling readers in grades K-6. Teachers, school staff and volunteers are teaming up to form a massive corps of concerned citizens who can give our children the help they need to learn to read. Funds were available by the Washington State Legislature to schools beginning in 1998. Each participating school decides whether to conduct their program during the summer, during the school year, or on weekends or intersessions. Last year, 11,000 citizens stepped up to meet this challenge. All volunteers undergo a background check, and receive training on how to effectively tutor students. Volunteers are supervised by a certified teacher or staff person. Volunteers can tutor an hour a week or more. Here's what the program looks like:

- 200 schools statewide are participating
- Schools are spending extra time on reading instruction, with smaller student-to-teacher ratios
- AmeriCorps and VISTA volunteers are serving as volunteer coordinators and tutors in reading corps schools
- Al volunteers receive training, and are always supervised by a certified teacher or qualified staff member
- 11,000 volunteers, directed by teachers, are providing reading tutoring for 23,000 students, grades K-6
- Volunteer tutors are working with students in summer and during the school year
- Community groups are providing books and other resources to children
- Training for teachers and volunteers in effective reading instruction is provided

As breadth of vocabulary and the ability to reason verbally—to follow a complex plot or argument, to analyze, and to remember what has been read—become more important than decoding skill, children with little exposure to stories and to other reading and writing activities in the early years often fall behind their more advantaged peers (Chall & Jacobs, 1983; Morrow, 1988; Purcell-Gates, McIntyre, & Freppon, 1995).

Thus, early strong scores in reading on standardized tests may not provide a balanced picture of reading potential. Rather, the test scores may simply be a measure of children's success in basic decoding, a necessary but insufficient reading skill (Beck & Carpenter, 1986; Braunger & Lewis, 1997; Stanovich, 1986). The 1986 NAEP report found that students' related problems in reading and expressing ideas in writing stem mainly from difficulty with verbal reasoning (Healy, 1990).

Because children from low-income families, in particular, may spend most of their primary years practicing isolated sounds and letters, they may miss out on a print- and story-rich environment experienced by their more advantaged peers. Pearson (1997) refers to putting the lowest-achieving students into a less-challenging curriculum as the "basic-skills conspiracy":

> First you gotta get all the words right and facts straight before you can do the "what ifs" and "I wonder whats." Lots of these students spend their entire school careers getting the words right and the facts straight, and they never get to the "what ifs" and the "I wonder whats" of the more challenging curriculum—the curriculum that prepares them for the worlds of work, public discourse, and personal challenge (p. 5).

Unfortunately, in such an environment, as Boloz and Jenness (1984) observe, "the rich enthusiasm and readiness for real reading and writing is traditionally lost, not because we expect too much; rather, that in education we often settle for too little" (p. 3). A number of studies have found that children in literature-based, integrated language arts classrooms have a more "positive disposition" for learning: That is, they are more motivated to read and write, more persistent, and more active in the use of learning strategies than those in traditional classrooms (Freppon, 1995; Holbrook, 1981; Morrow, 1992; Shapiro & White, 1991; Turner, 1995). Freppon (1995) studied children who entered second grade with a similar disposition for learning, defined as motivation and a positive sense of self. These terms included learners' talk and action as readers and writers themselves, their interest in and engagement with what they could and would do in reading and writing, and their self-initiated and sustained literacy interactions.

One group of children entered a traditional skills-based program, while the other children continued in a literature-based second grade. Freppon (1995) found that, while there were no statistical differences in pre- and post-standardized test scores, children in the skills-based group developed patterns of passivity and lost literate behaviors, such as choosing and persisting in reading and writing activities on their own. They frequently deferred personal knowledge and focused on rote-like completion of tasks, rather than exhibiting any interest in reading and writing.

Because the amount of time spent reading is strongly correlated with reading comprehension, vocabulary growth, and concept knowledge, this lack of interest in literacy activities is a cause for concern. But more importantly, a number of studies have shown that students' engagement, participation, and self-efficacy are critical in successful completion of school (Deyhle, 1992; Finn & Cox, 1992; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989).

**A Conversation With Liz Padilla Flynn, Pasco School District Bilingual Specialist**

Why are so many children from diverse cultures struggling with reading?

Why do so many minority kids have a hard time with reading? It is simple—the kids need to read. It's very simple, but it's not easy. We need to help teachers understand how important it is to convey a love for reading and not say, "It's time to read; pick up your book and read it." It needs to be, "Choose a book you want to read, and I will help you develop your own love of reading." It's really the quality of interactions you have with kids.

No matter whether we are White or minority teachers, we have all been prepared to teach middle-class kids. We have large numbers of children in poverty and cultural minority kids. We don't accept that it's OK to fail. We know that kids can succeed. We need to figure out what programs, strategies, materials are out there to increase academic success and decrease failure. What are best practices? Most teachers can teach, but how do we meet the needs of special populations? It can't happen in universities. New teachers get scared. But they shouldn't be afraid. We haven't done a good job of helping them see what works. We need to take what teachers know and build on that.

Our second-generation kids from Mexico are often the ones who struggle with reading the most. When you are second generation, often parents don't speak Spanish in the home because they want their kids to speak English and to fit into American society. So they speak only English but they speak a nonstandard dialect of English. When kids don't have a foundation language from which to build, it makes it hard to succeed academically. I didn't get my first "A" in English until I was 34 years old. It takes time to develop literacy. When children develop literacy in their primary language and then they move into English, they're strong.

Schools need to understand where kids are coming from. For example, discourse patterns. In my own speech, I don't get right to the point. I go in spirals, and cover a lot of things before I get back to the original question. But on standardized tests, they expect linear thought: 1 2 3--get to the conclusion quickly. But Hispanic speech patterns are not that way. Asian American and Native American patterns also tend to be more like a spiral; we tend to go round and round until the focus becomes narrower. We have to know where kids are coming from—then teach students to organize their thoughts orally and in writing.

We need to show kids how to write a formal paper, help them understand the difference between formal and informal dress and voice. There is a big difference between playground and academic English. Our second-generation kids aren't making it. There are also kids who are below average in their own language because of low literacy in the home. The best instruction must go to low-performing kids. They need a full complement of Reading Recovery. They need lots of oral language, reading aloud, and discussing stories. They need pictures to help them imagine as they listen.

When I was in the fifth grade, my teacher read A Wrinkle in Time. All the kids loved it, all except me. I was bored to tears. I didn't even get what she was reading. But I recently went into a high school classroom where the kids were reading Metamorphosis. I would have a hard time with that even now. But the teacher took the time to build a picture in their minds. She helped them to develop concepts and oral language.

The rate of high school dropout of second-generation kids is extreme. I have 70 cousins that I grew up with. They were the kids I played with. We all spoke the same way. The majority of them did not continue to college; high school was difficult. I married an Anglo man, and was immersed in a different kind of English. And later, my mom became a reader. She told me to read the Readers' Digest to increase my vocabulary.

But I didn't have a real appreciation of reading until I had my own children. I became a reader because I wanted my kids to succeed at school. So I read lots of books, nursery rhymes, and sang songs. I finally heard children's stories. Guess who was learning--me! I studied Spanish in college. I realized that I wasn't literate in my own language. I grew up in the '50s and '60s. Our concerns focused on food and clothing. I went back to college at age 30 and received my first "A" in English when I was 34.

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Parents need to understand what it takes to help kids be successful. Kids can't just come to school, although that is crucial; they need to do the work, get good grades. The sooner parents understand what they need to do, the more successful kids will be. They need to know how to get scholarships, what courses they need to take. And there are tensions in families. Everyone wants their kids to be successful, but they want them to stay close with the family.

In our community, there is high poverty and there are racist remarks. Some people have not liked the "color change." But we have a very large, stable Mexican American community now. A large migrant population came to pick asparagus, apples, potatoes. And now there are food-processing plants. Many migrant families settled and have entered mainstream professions.

Still, there is a lot of gang activity. Second-generation kids don't belong with new immigrant families, nor to the mainstream. So you have to be tough. You don't want to be seen as weak--you have to belong somewhere. Gangs are a way to survive. School is hard. Drugs are easy. It's easy to say, "I don't need school." If drugs are normal, you don't see anything wrong with it. You don't want to be picked on; you want to belong. Americans aren't really a community; we are isolated; we are detached in our little cubicles. That is the culture of this country. My mother struggled with this. She wanted us to be the best, but she didn't want us to move away. My mother often says, "I taught you to be too American."

Sometimes as an educator my passion gets in the way. I keep saying, "Don't give up on the kids." It's frustrating for teachers. It's really hard for kids too. I feel so bad when I see older kids dropping out. We didn't know as much about what kids need as we do now. We didn't have a transitional bilingual education in place, so we did it to them. The district attempts to move in a good direction. But my heart aches for those kids we have lost.

## Research on Brain Development

> *New brain research tells us the amazing impact that parents and other caregivers can have in helping children's brains develop. Every conversation a child hears and every nursery rhyme a child listens to as she or he is rocked to sleep are food for the brain.* (Riley, 2000)

Brain research helps explain why spending so much time getting the words straight and the facts right in the early years does not, in Healy's (1990) words, "help to install the cognitive and language furnishings that will make the brain a comfortable place for real literacy to dwell."The years between three and 10, described as "years of promise" by the 1996 Carnegie Task Force, are a time of rapid development of social, linguistic, cognitive, and physical competencies, corresponding with dramatic neurological changes (Carnegie Task Force, 1996). Early experiences and interactions directly affect the way the brain is wired. Because the brain is predisposed to search for how things make sense, strong connections are formed when children make meaning from their experiences (Caine & Caine, 1990).

At age 11, the brain begins to prune extra connections at a rapid rate. The circuitry or wiring that remains is more specific and efficient (Shore, 1997). The brain has been called the ultimate example of the saying "use it or lose it": connections that are used repeatedly in the early years become permanent; those that are not are eliminated. By robbing children of the opportunity to develop higher-order critical-thinking skills—to reflect, analyze, synthesize, build relationships with characters, predict, and question—we may miss the window of opportunity that these years of promise provide.

Reading instructor Alfred Tatum notes that African American adolescents are frequently assigned to a low-level reading track:

> African American boys assigned to my class were used to a quiet resignation from their teachers that suggested, "I know you can't read so I'm not going to require you to read novels, discuss them, and write your reflections." I understood that many of these boys did not espouse reading as a passion and realized that if I gave them a basic skills indoctrination without the benefit of reading literature, this would probably never change. . . I contend that if reading instruction is not provocative, meaningful, and designed to help African American males affirm their identity, they will be denied access to educational, economic, social, and political opportunities (1999, p. 4).

It is not only children from low-SES and culturally diverse families who suffer from the "basic skills conspiracy." Studies conducted in the 1970s and 1980s revealed that children spent more time on workbook assignments than on reading texts and that little time was spent actually reading texts (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Fielding & Pearson, 1994). For example, Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988) studied 155 fifth-graders and found that on most days, children did little or no book reading. The national commission that produced *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (1984) cautioned that mastery learning concepts, which overemphasize students' knowledge of discrete, low-level reading skills, do little to help children actually read, defined by the commission as "a process of extracting meaning from text."

Yet children in the intermediate and middle-school grades are often expected to read and write extended text at a sophisticated level. Dyson (1987) asks, "Considering the focus on basic skills in the early school years, the academic 'foundation' for these tasks is difficult to identify. Where do these intellectual and verbal abilities come from? Do they originate from practice in the primary grades on letters, sounds, and memorization of facts?" (p. 398).

Of course, the ability to match print to sound is a crucial part of becoming an independent and fluent reader. Children also need to develop and maintain a positive disposition toward literacy and the ability to think critically and imaginatively. The challenge for teachers is to help children build a solid literacy foundation in the primary grades, one that provides not only basic skills, but also multiple opportunities to "get lost in a story"—to reflect, to reason through an informational text, and create "possible worlds" through stories and dramatic play, and to share experiences, ideas, and opinions.

If children are to become strategic readers and writers, capable of high-level verbal reasoning, and able to engage in active and sustained work on interpreting and connecting ideas, they must begin learning these competencies in the early elementary years. Throughout their school years--from kindergarten through high school--students need ample opportunities to engage in activities that enhance language and thinking.

## Building a Solid Literacy Foundation

> *Each baby brain comes into the world uniquely fitted out for various forms of academic pursuit, but its pedagogical prognosis is largely determined by the ongoing mental traffic that trains it how to think and learn. For children, habits of the mind soon become structures of the brain.* (Healy, 1990, p. 138)

Despite differences of opinion over the best approach to teaching reading, there is substantial agreement among researchers and practitioners that the ultimate goal of reading is comprehension. Comprehension is a complex process that requires knowledge, experience, thinking, and feeling, and involves the integration of new information with existing knowledge and understandings (Feitelson, Kita, & Goldstein, 1986; Fielding & Pearson, 1994). Above all, comprehension depends on verbal reasoning, memory, and active and sustained work on interpreting and connecting ideas.

There is a strong statistical relationship between prior knowledge and reading-comprehension ability (Fielding & Pearson, 1994; Squire, 1983). In order to make sense of what they read and what they read and is read to them, children must see the connections between what they already know and what is read (Sweet, 1993). Research has shown:

- Engagement in the reading process is a critical factor in comprehension. In order for children to understand stories that they read or that are read to them, children must actively engage with the text.
- Because motivation to read is essential to engagement (Braunger & Lewis, 1997), learning to read and write requires active participation in activities that have meaning in the student's daily life (Strickland, 1990).
- Students' participation, engagement, and involvement play a critical role in their decision to stay in school (Deyhle, 1992; Finn & Cox, 1992; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesco, & Fernandez, 1989).

Fortunately, research over the last 20 years has provided a great deal of information about early learning experiences that promote children's success in school and beyond (Adams, 1990; Allington, 1994; Braunger & Lewis, 1997; McIntyre & Freppon, 1994; National Reading Panel, 2000; Pearson, & Fielding, 1991; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Sulzby & Teale, 1991). This research can inform teaching practices to ensure that children are not only reading well and fluently at grade three, but also are motivated to read and write throughout their school years and beyond.

It is an exciting time to be a teacher of young children. Traditionally, many early childhood educators have provided experiences that promote early literacy—child-centered conversations, storytelling and story reading, singing, drawing and painting, and pretend play. Research has confirmed that these activities play a critical role in both oral and written language development. Teachers no longer have to worry that reciting nursery rhymes, playing word games, and singing Raffi songs such as "I love to eat, eat, epples and benenes" are frivolous activities. Rather, they are helping children develop phonemic awareness (the ability to hear and manipulate the separate sounds in words), a prerequisite for phonics knowledge (understanding that letters stand for the sounds in spoken words) (Adams, 1990).

Reading aloud need not be seen as a frill to be engaged in only after important seat work is completed; instead, listening to stories is perhaps the most important activity for young children's literacy development (Riley, 1994). Illustrating stories and creating stories in response to pictures help children create rich mental models: these activities are critical for children who have trouble engaging with text. In addition, Honigman and Bhavnagri (1998) point out that when children reflect on artists' work and create their own artwork, "they develop an understanding that shape, color, and composition are elements of a language, just as the spoken and written word and nonverbal gestures are elements of a different kind of human language" (p.211).

Similarly, the link between dramatic play and storytelling and story reading has never been more secure. Pretend play is enriched by stories of all kinds, and acting out stories can bring the written word to life—enhancing story recall, overall intellectual performance, and social competence (Berk & Winsler, 1995).

### Children Who Learn to Read and Write "Naturally"

Much of the research on learning to read and write has come from studying the literacy development of children who come from homes with rich oral and written language environments. In such homes, children's efforts at storytelling, reading, and writing are accepted with interest and enthusiasm and enhanced by adult questions and encouragement. Songs, nursery rhymes, and other forms of wordplay build phonemic awareness and encourage the creative use of language. Adults and older siblings frequently read to themselves and out loud to infants and children, demonstrating the importance of literacy as well as its enjoyment.

Families of children who read and write early and "naturally" typically use a balanced approach to providing a literacy foundation. While they usually do not drill their children on isolated sounds and letters, neither do they simply give their children books and expect them to be able to read independently. Instead, like learning to talk, learning to read and write involves interaction with responsive adults who negotiate meaning with children. Bruner (1983) provides the following example of 22-month-old Richard's storybook reading.

| | |
|---|---|
| Mother: | What's that? |
| Richard: | Ouse. |
| Mother: | Mouse, yes. That's a mouse. |
| Richard: | More mouse (pointing to another picture). |
| Mother: | No, those are squirrels. They're like mice, but with long tails. Sort of. |
| Richard: | Mouse, mouse, mouse. |
| Mother: | Yes, all right, they're mice.Richard: Mice, mice. |

At first, as in this example, book reading consists primarily of looking at pictures and negotiating the names of squirrels, mice, hedgehogs, and other common and not-so-common objects and animals. Research suggests that being read to in itself may not be the only factor in enhancing literacy. Rather, it is the type and amount of verbal interaction between adult and child during story reading that may influence literacy development (Morrow, 1988; Teale & Sulzby, 1986).

A number of adult interactive behaviors have been identified as beneficial to the cooperative construction of meaning between adults and children. They include:

- Questioning
- Encouraging dialogue and children's responses
- Offering praise or positive feedback
- Giving or extending information
- Engaging in discussion, interpreting and making inferences
- Sharing personal reactions
- Connecting story elements to what a child already knows (Morrow, 1988; Sulzby & Teale, 1991)

Through the age of three, parents often encourage young children to interrupt stories with questions and comments, but by the age of four, children are often expected to listen to the story from beginning to end, saving most questions until the completion of the story (Heath, 1982). From an interactive conversation, such as the one between Richard and his mother, children progress to listening to increasingly complex orally read monologues (Sulzby, 1985). Children, then, are introduced to written language in the context of a meaningful and enjoyable interaction with an adult, often with a self-chosen book read from the comfort of a caregiver's lap. Holdaway (cited in Park, 1982) describes the three phases of experience through which a favorite book passes in the bedtime story:

> First there is a successful introduction to the book for the purpose of enjoyment. There may be considerable participation and questioning by the child in a relaxed and unpressured way. . . . Second, the child demands many repetitions over the next few days or weeks—the "read-it-again" phenomenon. . . . Third, the child spends many happy hours independently with the favorite book, role-playing as reader and recreating the familiar experience with increasing sophistication. (p. 816).

### Washington Literacy Task Force

In order to link the experiences of early childhood with eventual success in school, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Early Childhood Literacy Task Force has identified characteristics of young children in the areas of verbal communication, reading, and writing. The "Framework for Achieving the Essential Academic Learning Requirements in Reading, Writing, and Communication" includes:

- An outline of the continuum of emergent literacy and literacy development (reading, writing, speaking) in the context of early childhood education (birth to eight years of age)
- Identification of "emergent literacy benchmarks" for early childhood education
- Identification of appropriate instructional strategies—developmentally and individually appropriate
- Strategies for assessing progress toward benchmarks
- Information on how to use assessment information to inform education decisions
- Information that facilitates the transition from early childhood education to K-3 education

## Storybook Reading by Children Who Are Not Yet Reading

Through repeated readings, and with the help of illustrations and their growing understanding that print makes sense, children develop their storybook-reading ability. Long before they can actually read print, children often "read" the illustrations of a book or a memorized rhyme or story to themselves, to parents, friends, pets, and stuffed animals. Increasingly, researchers consider storybook reading by children who are not yet reading an important part of literacy development (Hiebert, 1997; MacGilllivray, 1997; Sulzby & Teale, 1991).

After reviewing the literature and listening to children from two to five years old read their favorite picture storybook, Sulzby (1985) developed broad categories for a classification scheme of patterns of young children's storybook-reading behaviors. Children's early attempts to read (when asked to read to an adult) are based on pictures, and stories are not yet formed. In this stage, children merely describe the pictures in a storybook without using book language. Next, children still rely on pictures, but stories are formed. These first reading attempts sound like oral language and may not closely follow the text.

Before children can decode the printed word, their storytelling becomes increasingly like written language. They progress from treating individual pages of storybooks as if they are discrete units to treating the book as the unit. In this stage, children weave stories across the book's pages, progressing from a mixture of oral and written language-like reading to "reading" that is quite similar to the original story. In these later stages, although the illustrations still may be needed to jog their memory of the story, children demonstrate that they are learning the structure as well as the linguistic features of stories by "talking like a book" (Clay, 1979). By now, children who have been read to frequently have developed a number of expectations about stories; first and foremost, they expect a story to make sense.

Finally, children's attention begins to focus on print, as well as on illustrations. In the early stages of attending to the printed text, children may focus on a few known words, a few letters and associated sounds, or upon the remembered text (Sulzby, 1985). During these first stages of reading the printed word, children may use several strategies to keep stories meaningful, including reading word for word from a memorized or predictable book and telling stories from pictures when the print is too difficult to decode verbatim. MacGillivray (1997) reported that in her study of first-graders, children regularly switched strategies to meet different circumstances. For example, a reader might sound out every word while reading to a parent and then, when in front of peers, shift into a retelling to keep listening friends entertained.

**Early writing.** Writing, too, follows a developmental progression. Children's early attempts at writing draw their attention to the details of words, leading to improved phonemic awareness and word recognition. At first, children may randomly string together letters, but as their phonemic awareness grows, they progress to using beginning consonants to represent a word. Next initial and final consonants may be used, followed by vowel/consonant combinations.

Finally, children demonstrate their awareness of separate syllables by representing all syllables in the words they write. Standard spelling is the final stage. However, just as children use a variety of strategies in reading, they often use a number of strategies to write, depending on the situation. Hiebert (1988) explains: "On a common task like writing their names, young children may use conventional spelling and handwriting. On a less familiar task, like writing a story, children may use drawing, scribbling, letter-like forms, familiar letters (e.g., the first letter of their name), and invented spelling" (p. 164).

**The transition from oral to written language.** Although learning to read and write tends to follow the flexible developmental patterns described previously, caregivers do not *wait* for children to develop these skills on their own, a "ripening neurons" approach advocated by some followers of Gessell, an influential physician of the early 20th century. Rather, they *scaffold* their children's learning, a term introduced by Wood and his collaborators (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Scaffolding is a flexible way to provide temporary, adjustable support to children's efforts that is sensitively tuned to their needs (Berk & Winsler, 1995). During a storybook reading, scaffolding may include strategies such as asking questions to assist problem solving, providing information (e.g., labeling objects), and reading only part of a story while allowing the child to "read" the predictable text, such as a refrain of a song.

By providing many relaxed, interactive experiences with reading and writing, children are helped to develop skills and strategies to understand written texts. In this way, children transition from *oral* language, which is face-to-face and interactive, to *written* language, which is more formal and lacks contextual cues such as gestures and intonation.

Researchers agree that reading comprehension draws heavily upon oral language skills. However, written language is not just oral language written down. "Written language, unlike oral language, must carry the total load of meaning without ambiguity. It is more formal, more complete, and more textured that spoken language" (Holdaway, 1979, p. 54), and is designed to have the composer and receiver removed in time and place from each other (Sulzby, 1985). Sulzby explains how caregivers help children acquire decontextualized language skills, which are associated with literacy and school achievement:

> Fortunately, young children who are read to before formal school are ushered into an understanding of the relationships between oral and written language within a social context in which written language is used in hybridized fashion at first and then gradually takes on its more conventional nature. This hybridized form is evident particularly in parent-child storybook interactions in which characteristics of oral language enter into the parents' rendering of the "written text" (p. 460).

An example of a book reading provided by Strickland and Taylor (1989) demonstrates this hybrid form, which includes a mixture of verbatim reading of the text and conversational language. As the mother, Karen, reads *The Story of Babar* to her three-year-old daughter, Christina, she sensitively relates the extraordinary happenings in the life of an elephant in England to the everyday life of her little girl. These kinds of interactions help children use their knowledge to make sense of information from a book and show children how the information in the book can be related to their lives:

> Karen tells Christina what is happening in the story. "He goes into the store," she says, "and he goes into the elevator." Karen points to the elevator and asks Christina, "Does this look like the old broken down elevator in Mommy's office?"
>
> "Yes," replies Christina.
>
> "But this one's not broken," her mother says, "It goes up and down." Karen returns to the story. "And the mans says, 'This is not a toy, Mr. Elephant. You must get out and do your shopping'" (p. 28).

While storybook reading is helping children to make the important transition from oral to written language, it is also enhancing oral language and critical-thinking skills, imagination, and a love of reading. Of course it is not only storybook reading that prepares children to read and write. Numerous and varied experiences with oral and written language lead a child into literacy. It is easy to see why years of child-centered experiences—conversations; singing; telling stories; listening to, talking about, memorizing, and acting out stories; drawing; writing mock messages; and pretending to read—engender a rich enthusiasm and readiness for engagement in authentic reading and writing.

With such a strong literacy foundation, many children are able to crack the print/sound code with little explicit instruction in their first year of school. As Sulzby (1985) points out, children who learn to read without formal instruction have often been described as teaching themselves to read from favorite storybooks. Making meaning from print is only another step, albeit an important one, in the enjoyable, meaningful, and gradual process of becoming literate.

### Selecting a Book for Your Child

Dear Parents,

There is such a large selection of books for children these days–how do you know which ones to choose to read to your child? Your objective as a parent is to get good books into the hands of your child, books that you think he will like. How do you know which book will strike the chord and turn your child onto something new, something creative that will capture the imagination?

Here are some hints in selecting a book for your child:

- Start with a child's interest–and then run with it! A good book in a particular subject matter will not only entertain your child but will be educational as well.
- Bring your child along–to the library or bookstore–when picking out a book. The more she takes an active interest in the project, the more interested she will be to read the book.
- Is the book age appropriate? Does the "type size" seem suitable? What about the amount of text?
- Find books with pictures, even if your child thinks the book looks like a "baby" book. The pictures help spark discussions. They unlock the imagination and they promote creative storytelling.
- Select a book you enjoyed as a child and read it aloud with "excitement" and familiarity. Most likely, with this enthusiasm, your child will enjoy it, too.
- Select books that have received Newbery and Caldecott awards. These award-winning titles are selected by their content and are safe bets for satisfaction.
- Select ones that are fun for you to read. The more animated you sound when reading, the more fun your child will have listening; the experience will be enjoyable for you both.
- Select books that link a child to his everyday world. If you have just baked cookies and the characters in the story are baking cookies, you can relate the experience to one your child has just had, making the story more real.

Remember, you can always ask a librarian or bookstore professional to direct you to books you and your child might take home and enjoy. They are there to assist you with your specific needs and goals.

Here are some favorite books for kindergarten and first-graders that you might make part of your home library:

**(continued)**

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- *A, My Name is Alice* – by Jane Bayer
- *Amazing Grace* – by Mary Hoffman
- *Anno's Counting Book* – by Mitsumasa Anno
- *Bread and Jam for Frances* – by Russell Hoban
- *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* – by Bill Martins
- *Caps for Sale* – by Esphyr Slobodkina
- *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* – by Bill Martin
- *Feelings* – by Aliki
- *Frog and Toad Are Friends* – by Arnold Lobel
- *Good Night, Owl!* – by Pat Hutchins
- *Ira Sleeps Over* – by Bernard Waber
- *Owen* – by Kevin Henkes
- *Song and Dance Man* – by Karen Ackerman

Source: Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) from the Central Kitsap School District

When teachers begin reading instruction at the print level, children from disadvantaged literacy backgrounds are required to forego the stages of literacy development that more advantaged children experience. By trying to speed up the process of literacy development, we often fail to appreciate and allow opportunities for what Dyson (1987) describes as the "often messy, noisy, and colorful process of becoming literate" (p. 408). The result may be initial progress in learning to recognize and pronounce words, but at the expense of comprehension, verbal reasoning, and motivation to read.

Can the strategies and approaches that nurture literacy development in the homes of "well-read-to" children be effectively transferred to a school setting? A small but growing body of research suggests that they can. A number of studies have found that children in classrooms that offer multiple opportunities to engage in authentic reading and writing activities appear to develop phonics knowledge, spelling, grammar, and punctuation skills as well as or better than children in more traditional classrooms (McIntyre & Freppon, 1994; Stice & Bertrand, 1990).

Children in literature-based classrooms seem more inclined to read for meaning, achieve higher scores on tests of reading comprehension, develop more strategies for dealing with problems in reading, and tend to use phonics knowledge more effectively than children in more traditional classrooms where skills are practiced in isolation (Freppon, 1991, 1995; Weaver, Gillmeister-Krause, & Vento-Zogby, 1996). In addition, a number of studies have found that children in literature-based classrooms have a stronger sense of themselves as readers and writers (Freppon, 1995; Morrow, 1992; Stice & Bertrand, 1990).

Dahl and Freppon (1995) reported that children in a literature-based classroom were more likely to become personally involved in reading and writing, value their own experience and personal language and connect them with written language, and talk about and reflect on their written language experiences. Providing these experiences at school is particularly important for children with few experiences with reading and writing in their homes. Pasco district bilingual specialist, Liz Flynn, asks,

> Why are so many ELL children struggling with reading? It's simple—the kids need to read. It's very simple, but it's not easy. Teachers need to convey a love for reading and not say, "It's time to read; pick up your book and read it." It needs to be, "Choose a book you want to read, and I will help you develop your own love of reading." It's really the quality of interactions you have with kids.

## A Balanced Curriculum: Avoiding the Instructional Cuisinart

Balance is a word that is often invoked to describe an optimal literacy curriculum for young children. But when practitioners strive for balance, can they avoid an eclectic approach that offers little coherence in its philosophy and practices, an approach described by Bialostok (1997) as the "instructional Cuisinart: a little bit of phonics and a little whole language"? Many educators believe that they can. Pearson (1997) cautions, however, that "balance is not about negotiating a compromise between two adversarial positions." Instead, "balance is about seeking that optimal mix of practices that can be supported by converging evidence and practice, resulting in a coherent, flexible curriculum available to ALL students."

While there is still disagreement about the best *approach* to reading instruction, few disagree that comprehension is the ultimate *purpose* of reading (Stanovich, 1986). Because engagement in the reading process is a critical factor in comprehension, an essential feature of literacy instruction in the primary years is to help children develop and maintain a positive disposition toward reading and writing. True engagement involves the ability to enter into the world of the story—to imagine a setting, to interpret a plot, to build relationships with characters, to visualize or "see" what is being read. Enciso (1992) described engagement in reading as:

> . . . our entry into the world of the story and the intense involvement we feel as we imagine and interpret the characters, setting, events and thematic possibilities of literacy texts. It includes a complex interplay of imaginative and intellectual processes that are typically private and elusive, yet critical to comprehension and pleasure in reading (p. 1).

Clearly, a vast array of skills, knowledge, and dispositions are necessary for success in reading and writing. These competencies must be nurtured through home/school/community partnerships, in schools that create a caring community of learners and that provide a culturally responsive curriculum. In addition to these basics, a number of elements of effective literacy curricula for primary-age children have been identified, including:

- A "print-rich" environment, with a reading and writing center and literacy-enhanced learning centers
- Reading aloud, discussing stories, and independent reading
- Teacher demonstrations of skills and strategies for decoding
- Dictating stories and acting them out
- Opportunities to write, with various levels of support
- Using projects to integrate literacy into all aspects of the classroom, including art and music
- Monitoring children's progress

## Elements of a Balanced Curriculum

### A Print-Rich Environment

> *What a child knows about print depends upon the richness of the environment and the responsiveness of the adult.* (Nebraska Department of Education, 1993)

Cambourne (1987) reminds us that "from the moment children are born, meaningful spoken language washes over and surrounds children. They are *immersed* in a language flood, and for most of their waking time, proficient users of the language-culture bathe them in the sounds, meanings, cadences and rhythms of the language that they have to learn" (p. 6). In order to provide similar conditions for the printed medium, in an optimal language-learning environment, printed materials are everywhere; it is a "print-rich" environment. On the walls, there may be charts, calendars, poems, lists, songs, graphs, and a message board (Strickland, 1990).

Learning centers, a mainstay in preschool settings, are less utilized in primary school classrooms. However, many primary school teachers have found that learning centers—puzzles, games, listening centers, book corners, computers, writing centers, Play Dough, blocks—that appeal to children's multiple intelligences can help children find their comfort level. In an inviting listening center, children can hear tape-recorded stories; nearby is a cozy book corner, with large cushions, a variety of books and puppets, and a flannel board to help children recall and reenact stories they have heard. These activities aid in developing comprehension, a sense of story structure, and oral language (Morrow, 1992).

The book corner should include songs and literature from a variety of cultures, lifestyles, and income groups, especially—but not limited to—those represented in the classroom. In this inviting corner, children read individually and with peers as they develop literacy skills and the enjoyment of reading. Bisset (cited in Morrow, 1990) found that children in classrooms with their own collections of literature read and looked at books 50 percent more often than children whose classrooms housed no such collections. In addition to a book corner, there is a writing center, well stocked with a variety of writing and drawing tools and surfaces, portable chalk boards, easels, dry-erase boards, alphabet blocks, letter tiles, an assortment of alphabet puzzles, and an alphabet pocket chart.

### Literacy-Enhanced Learning Centers

Literacy-enhanced play centers provide additional opportunities for children to explore print in functional and meaningful ways. For example, in the housekeeping corner, teachers can put books to read to dolls and stuffed animals and materials for letters and lists; in the block corner, children can make signs and labels for their structures. If children seem to be bored with these traditional centers, teachers can plan with children to create exciting centers—farms, offices, grocery stores, spaceships, school buses, and flower shops, to name just a few. All of the centers in the room should, in Freppon's (1991) words, "include invitations to interact with print" (p. 192). Pickett (1998) found that the presence of an adult model with whom to interact in the enriched environment dramatically increased literacy behaviors.

Researchers have found that pretend play, in which children make up increasingly complex stories and act them out, helps children transition into storytelling, writing, and reading. Studies of the play-literacy connection have found that the social nature of play had a positive impact on measures of print knowledge, emergent story reading, and story recall (Rowe, 1998). Dramatic play supports cognitive development by providing opportunities for symbolic manipulation and verbal reasoning, and social development through social interaction and opportunities for collaborative problem solving (Berk & Winsler, 1995). In sum, fantasy play contributes to social maturity and the construction of diverse aspects of language and cognition to enhance:

- Overall intellectual performance
- The generation of creative ideas
- Memory for diverse forms of information
- Language competence, especially the capacity to reason theoretically
- The differentiation of appearance and reality
- The playful stream of verbal narrative that comments on and assists us in coping with our daily life (Berk & Winsler, 1995)

## Sharing Books with Children

*What students bring to class is where learning begins. It starts there and goes places.* (Ira Shor, 1992)

### Reading Aloud

As stated earlier, Marilyn Adams, in *Beginning to Read* (1990), estimated that the typical middle-class child enters first grade with 1,000 to 1,700 hours of one-on-one picture-book reading, while the corresponding child from a low-income family averages 25 such hours. Unfortunately, in many kindergartens and primary school classrooms, an emphasis on decoding increases these differences. Some researchers argue convincingly that children cannot independently comprehend unfamiliar texts without being able to decode them. Learning to decode texts, then, is logically a prerequisite to learning to read and must precede reading for enjoyment and comprehension. Based on this reasoning, many teachers view story reading as a "frill," to be engaged in only after the real work of decoding and learning grammar and punctuation are done.

But children *can* comprehend texts that are far above their independent reading level. Listening to stories at a level that is more advanced than a child's independent reading level encourages engagement and builds listening and comprehension skills. Because of the strong correlation between story reading and later reading achievement, it is worth reiterating the benefits of reading aloud to children. So important is reading aloud for children of all ages, that a number of researchers (Bialostok, 1992; Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990; Cullinan, 1987) strongly recommend that even teachers in the higher grades regularly read to their classes to increase their reading vocabulary.

Researchers have found that listening to stories in the context of a pleasurable, social interaction:

- Builds vocabulary and concept knowledge
- Aids development of sophisticated language structures
- Enhances memory, imagination, attention span, and listening skills
- Helps children think in more complex, abstract, and creative ways
- Broadens children's range of experience
- Helps children learn the structure as well as the linguistic features of stories or narrative text
- Enhances print knowledge and decoding ability
- Aids the development of phonemic awareness through rhyme and alliteration (Chomsky, 1972; Dickenson & Smith, 1994; Purcell-Gates, 1988; Schickedanz, 1986; Wells, 1986)

As discussed earlier, frequent story reading helps children make the transition from spoken to written language. Hearing stories read aloud not only increases children's knowledge of written vocabulary, but also familiarizes them with the many concepts and ways of saying found in written discourse. In his book for parents, *Raising Readers*, Bialostok (1992) discusses how written language sounds different from oral language:

> I have not in recent memory started a conversation with, "Once upon a time," even though it is a familiar structure in fairy tales. If Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* was written to sound like oral language, instead of beginning with "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times," it might read "I've had mixed feelings about the past several years. Part of it was okay, but part of it stunk!" (p. 29).

Learning the special features of written language through story reading helps children use their expectations of upcoming structures and words to more accurately and quickly process (read) ongoing text (Purcell-Gates, McIntyre, & Freppon, 1995). This familiarity with the features of written language also appears to help children decode texts, even without explicit instruction. For example, Feitelson, Kita, and Golstein (1986) were surprised to find that children who had been read aloud to for 20 minutes each day not only outscored children in a more traditional classroom on measures of comprehension and active use of language, but also on measures of decoding. They hypothesized that at the beginning stage of reading, better comprehension already has an impact on decoding ability. Purcell-Gates, McIntyre, and Freppon remind us:

> Words are surface markers and place holders for concepts, and word knowledge allows one access to the concepts of written discourse. The greater depth and breadth of one's word knowledge, the greater one's ability to comprehend the various genres of text at increasingly complex levels (1995, p. 681).

**Take Home Program**
**Naval Avenue Elementary, Bremerton, Washington**

In addition to providing children with opportunities to read and be read to, Naval Avenue Elementary's Take Home program encourages family involvement in enjoyable activities at home. The program provides kindergarten through second-grade students with packets to take home every day to do with their parents. Funded through a "Tools for Schools" grant and Title I Parent Involvement money, each packet includes a book, corresponding games and activities, and an information card and feedback form for parents. The books and activities are aligned with Washington's Essential Academic Learning Requirements.

The program started when teachers realized that most first-graders had few books at home that they could read, rather parents had more difficult books that were read to the children. Therefore, the packets for first-graders include books with easy-to-read text and phonics games. Second-graders receive books with more continuous text and more writing activities. Teachers also found that many kindergarten children were coming to school with limited vocabulary and a low language base, so their packets include read-aloud books for parents to read to children, as well as some beginning reading books and stories that encourage vocabulary.

Students bring home packets every night, Mondays through Thursdays, but the program is so popular that students are requesting to take home packets on Fridays too.

## Shared Reading Experience

While there is no one right way to read a story to children, researchers have identified a number of features of effective story readings. Not surprisingly, these features are found in the bedtime story readings with successful early readers. Don Holdaway (1979) of New Zealand introduced "shared-book experience" in order to "shift the enjoyment of a rich, open literature of favorite stories, poems, and songs right into the center of literacy instruction, and to develop teaching procedures which would make this possible" (p. 816).

While there are many opportunities for children to learn vocabulary and decoding strategies from teacher models and demonstrations during a shared book experience, Holdaway stresses that the experience should be one of "shared pleasure. Like the bedtime story, the learning environment is trusting, secure, and expectant. It is free from competition, criticism and constant correction, and sets up a natural intimacy between the teacher and children" (p. 815).

**Big Books and predictable books.** During shared reading, children should be exposed to a variety of texts, and the literature should be carefully chosen for its high quality of language and illustrations (Routman, 1994). Frequently "Big Books" are used, and an experienced reader points to the text and invites children to read along. Both illustrations and predictable patterns (refrains, rhyme, rhythm, and repetition) provide scaffolds for young readers and allow children to recognize whole-language sequences. Experience with predictable language patterns are particularly important for children who are learning English as a second language. Using lots of predictable books, poems, chants, and songs that include repetition of phrases helps children learn vocabulary and knowledge of story structure within enjoyable activities.

While a steady diet of predictable books is not necessary, books with predictable patterns do encourage children to predict and remember larger parts of the text. When children can chime in with "Run, run, as fast as you can" or "And Pierre said, 'I don't care,'" they learn to associate written words with the oral words they recite from memory. Unlike word-for-word processing, these early recitations have the fluency of real language (Park, 1982).

Bill Martin's *Brown Bear, Brown Bear: What Did You See?* (1967) was one of the earliest predictable texts and, as Hiebert (1997) explains, it "became the prototype for the predictable text, as did his notion of 'whole-book-success,' that children could read the whole book successfully when the syntactic pattern was predictable, and thus grasp the power and pleasure of reading before they had acquired word recognition" (p. 5).

Hiebert advises that beginning texts should have a small predictable unit that accounts for a high proportion of the text. As children's ability to recognize words grows, the size of the predictable unit should be increased and the proportion of the text accounted for by the predictable unit decreased. Illustrations that depict concepts with which young children are highly familiar and that can be easily figured out act as scaffolds for young children's word identification. Later, illustrations may continue to help convey events in a story episode, rather than individual words (Hiebert, 1997).

**Repeated readings.** Following story reading, children should have opportunities to reread the books, poems, and songs independently. When enlarged texts are used, tape recordings of many selections should be available and little books of the same title should always be available (Routman, 1994). Children who have had few prior book experiences, in particular, need numerous experiences with texts to focus on critical features and to remember them (Hiebert, 1997). Repeated readings of storybooks are often not a part of the curriculum in many traditional classrooms. However, as any parent or teacher knows, young children love to read favorite books over and over again.

As discussed earlier, Sulzby (1985) found that the familiarity that comes from repeated readings enables children to reenact stories or attempt to read stories on their own. These reenactments model the adult's storybook reading and draw their attention to print. Hiebert observes, "When the information at the word level is not yet available to children, their text expectations draw their attention to individual words and support the development of an ever-expanding reading vocabulary" (p. 3).

Morrow (1988) studied the effects on children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds of repeated readings of storybooks in school settings. These one-on-one story readings encouraged interaction between the teacher and child. She found that children in the repeated-book group had significantly more responses dealing with print and story structure, and more interpretative and predictive responses. Children with lower-ability skills, in particular, benefited from repeated readings, making more comments and questions than those of higher ability in the repeated reading group:

> Repeating books offers the child familiarity with the words, story, and illustrations. By the third reading, the children's habits of asking detail questions had changed and developed into more complex, more interpretative behavior. They began to make associations, judgments, and elaborative comments. They predicted more frequently, using prior knowledge, and they attempted pre-reading by reciting or narrating stories from memory, or actually reading a word here and there (p. 103).

**Importance of interaction and discussion.** In Morrow's study, the increased responsiveness of the children was also the result of the interactive behaviors of the adults. Unlike a didactic approach, in which children are expected to recall information of a clearly specified type, an approach that emphasizes sharing ideas, experiences, and opinions helps children make personal connections with a story.

Purcell-Gates, McIntyre, and Freppon (1995) identified three features of successful storybook-reading routines that resulted in significant gains by children from low-SES families. Children were given the message that they were to:

- First and foremost, make sense of the story
- Learn to anticipate the author's message
- Make personal connections with the story

Similarly, Shanahan and Hogan (cited in Morrow, 1988) compared the interactive behavior of adults during story reading with children's subsequent achievement on a test of print awareness. They found that the number of minutes spent reading per week, the number of answers to the child's questions during readings, and the number of references to the child's own experiences were the best predictors of the child's achievement on the measure used.

However, Dickinson and Smith (1994) concluded that teachers "need not feel compelled to constantly stop and discuss books at length" (p. 118). In a study that compared different styles of book reading to preschool children, they found that for group reading, a performance-oriented style resulted in superior results on story comprehension and vocabulary development. The performance style treats the reading of books as a performance that is to be interrupted only for important matters, with discussion occurring before and after reading. In this study, although overall speech was not related to reading achievement, lower vocabulary development was associated with a didactic style, in which teachers asked children to recall specific information.

Both group reading and one-one-one story reading lead to significant gains in comprehension, creation of original stories, language complexity, decoding, and vocabulary development (Morrow, 1992; Morrow, O'Conner, & Smith, 1990; Purcell-Gates, McIntyre, & Freppon, 1995). Volunteers, including older children, parents, and senior citizens, can provide many opportunities for children to hear stories in a relaxed, social, one-on-one situation in a school setting. These individualized opportunities are particularly important for children who have had few experiences with reading stories. In group story reading, discussion that focuses on making predictions and interpretations, rather than correct answers, can challenge and expand children's thinking and helps children feel that they are participating in the classroom community.

**The importance of informational texts.** While narrative texts provide opportunities to use their imaginations, to get lost in a story, and to develop their own narrative voice, children's ability to read informational texts is a critical competency that should be nurtured as early as the preschool years. Children are naturally curious about the world they live in. Books about animals, the weather, volcanoes, famous people (to name just a few) invite children to explore topics of interest and prepare them for the hard work of analyzing and comprehending increasingly complex expository texts, crucial competencies in contemporary American society.

Yet, often children spend little time with this genre. A study of 20 first-grade classrooms from Michigan State University found a scarcity of informational texts in classroom print environments and activities. Children spent a mean of only 3.6 minutes per day with informational texts during classroom written language activities. Children in low-socioeconomic classrooms spent even less time with informational texts—a mere 1.9 minutes. Half the low-SES classrooms spent no time with informational texts during the days they were observed. The study's principle investigator recommends several strategies for increasing attention to informational texts in the early grades, without *decreasing* attention to narrative texts, including:

- Curricular mandates
- Teacher training
- Linking informational reading and writing to science achievement
- Increasing the budget for reading materials in the early grades
- Including such texts in home reading programs

**Kinder Nights**
**Garfield Elementary, Toppenish, Washington**

The goal of Garfield Elementary's Kinder Nights is to educate parents about what they can do at home to help their child succeed in school and be ready for first grade. There has been a broad range of activities at the Kinder Nights. At the first meeting, an outside speaker from the Yakima Valley Farm Worker's Clinic spoke about good parenting. "The first night we gave each parent an apple because we said they're the teacher so they get the apple, indicating the respect and rapport they are trying to build with parents," says Kathy Garza, who coordinates the Kinder Nights. At reading and math nights, discussions about literacy activities and books are held in both English and Spanish, while students meet in another room to do a related activity. Parents and children also act out stories, sing, and dance. Packets that contain books, activities and games for kids, as well as booklets (in English and Spanish) for parents with ideas on how they can help children learn are sent home with families.

Kinder Nights are advertised through the city newspaper, school newspaper, reader board, flyers sent home with students, and the Spanish radio station. The whole family is invited, and child care is provided for siblings.

## Encouraging Independent Reading

Research has shown that the amount of time children spend reading is a strong predictor of children's reading achievements (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Stanovich, 1986). Braunger and Lewis (1997) summarize the benefits of independent reading. Independent reading provides opportunities for children to:

- Apply reading strategies independently
- Read for a sustained period of time
- Use strategies on a variety of texts
- Solve words independently while reading texts well within their control
- Develop fluency
- Develop confidence through sustained, successful reading
- Support each other through reading

The amount of time that children *choose* to spend reading is enhanced by a combination of opportunities for: (a) social interaction; (b) an abundance of high-quality reading materials; (c) reading aloud to children; and (d) teacher emphasis on free reading (Morrow, 1992; Ng, Gutherie, McCann, Van Meter & Alao, 1996; Sweet, 1993). In addition, there are many strategies that teachers can use to encourage independent reading, including:

- Independent book tubs or "browsing boxes" containing books selected to match children's reading level (as evidenced by their ability to read the words with 95 percent accuracy) help ensure successful reading and build confidence. Books can be a combination of teacher- and child-chosen selections.
- Having a number of choices of reading material—including children's own learning logs and journals, poems and books that have been memorized, and print-filled walls—helps children be successful with a minimum of teacher guidance.
- Book bags (containing several books that children take home every night) encourage children to read at home and also encourage family involvement in reading.
- Buddy reading. Cooperative learning activities can enhance enjoyment and increase competence. Permission and encouragement to "ask a friend" helps make learning fun and decreases the need for teacher direction.

If children are to form the lifelong habit of reading in the primary school years, they need multiple opportunities to read many different kinds of texts, with varying levels of support—from reading aloud to independent reading. "What is critical," as Braunger and Lewis (1997) point out, is "that children do read—lots, for sustained periods of time, for meaning, and for real and authentic purposes" (p. 54).

## Teacher Demonstrations of Skills and Strategies for Decoding

*Comprehension is the ultimate purpose of reading* (Stanovich & Stanovich, 1995)

While the *meaning* and *content* of reading are critical to the reading and writing process, the emergent reader also needs to be aware of the form and mechanics of reading and writing. It is clear that being aware of the separate sounds in words (phonemic awareness) and learning to match these sounds to letters (phonics) are crucial for independent reading and writing. As discussed earlier, for some children—even those who have extensive experience with storybook reading—this last step is somewhat of an "unnatural act." Yopp (1992) explains:

> Performing phonemic awareness tasks is not easy. The tasks require that children treat speech as an object and that they shift their attention away from the content of speech to the form of speech. Phonemic awareness tasks demand that children analyze or manipulate the units of speech rather than focus on meaning.

Philip Gough of the University of Texas (1997), agrees:

> The child's awareness that a word is composed of phonemes is typically not there. If you take the average four-year-old and say what's the first sound in "fish," they say, "Fish don't make sounds." That is, what they're obsessed with is the meaning of words. And what we have to do in kindergarten or the first grade is draw their attention to the sounds and words which they have been looking right through to the meaning.

How teachers help children accomplish this task may have profound effects on children's ability and motivation to read and write. They must help children maintain and strengthen their focus on the whole of language—the meaning—while they draw their attention to the parts of language—the letters and words. Without this dual focus, children may learn to, in Healy's (1990) words, "bark at print," but at the expense of comprehension, verbal reasoning, and motivation to read and write. Children who have had few experiences with stories are particularly at risk for losing track of the fact that reading is supposed to make sense. Phonics may even become a gatekeeper, holding children back from reading whole texts (Weaver, 1997).

When children in the primary grades are unable to hear the separate sounds in words, they may be seen by their teachers as "reading disabled." In turn, these early labels may lead to low expectations that become internalized by the child. Fortunately, just as emergent literacy has informed our understanding of how children learn to make sense of print, we also know a great deal about the process of learning to decode the printed word.

When children lack phonemic awareness, teachers can provide many enjoyable activities that promote the development of this important competency. We have seen that children develop phonemic awareness from the oral and written language they are exposed to during their preschool and primary-school years. In particular, books and songs with rhymes and alliteration and language play, such as tongue-twisters and pig Latin, help children learn to hear the separate sounds in words. In addition, phonemic awareness is promoted by encouraging the use of developmental spelling, and by drawing children's attention to letter/sound patterns in familiar words.

The ability to hear the separate sounds in words is an important part of developing phonics knowledge (the ability to match print with sound). In summary, children develop both phonemic awareness and phonics knowledge from:

- Rereading favorite storybooks, particularly books with rhymes and alliteration
- Using predictable texts to scaffold their reading
- Reading familiar signs in the environment

- Seeing adults write, paying attention as adults draw attention to letter/sound patterns in familiar words
- Using invented spelling to write their names, stories, and messages

### Onset, Rime, and Analogy

While there is much debate regarding the optimal mix of practices that lead to efficient decoding, there is considerable agreement on the goal of phonics instruction: children should learn to read many words automatically and fluently. Following are some of the insights we have gained into how children acquire phonics knowledge. Of course, not all children learn in the same ways. As in all good teaching, individualized instruction based on careful assessment is crucial.

- Most young children have difficulty analyzing words into separate sounds, for example, separating "cat" into its three letters and corresponding sounds. This is because phonemes are not discrete units. The attributes of a phoneme spill over into those that come before it and follow it in a word (Adams, 1990; Gunning, 1995; Treiman, 1985).
- Children become sensitive to rhyme at an early age. Bryant, Bradley, Maclean, and Crossland (1989) showed that nursery rhyme knowledge at three years was related to reading ability at six years even after differences in social background and IQ were taken into account.
- Goswami and Bryant (1993) suggested that the linguistic units *onset* and *rime* may be crucial in explaining the robust link between rhyming and reading. *Onset* is the initial consonant or consonant clusters, and *rime* is the vowel of a syllable plus any consonants that might follow. For example, in the word "cat," *c* is the onset and *at* is the rime; in the word "splat," *spl* is the onset and *at* is the rime.
- Wise, Olson, and Treiman (1990) found that first-grade readers who learned to read words by segmenting them into onset and rime subunits remembered how to read the words better than readers who segmented the words into other units.
- Children who recognize onsets and rimes can learn to make *analogies* between spelling patterns in words to help them read new words. For example, a child who can read *table* can more easily learn to read *stable*, *cable*, *gable*, and *fable*. Adams (1990) concluded that an analogy approach is not only a strategy used by skilled readers, but also an effective method for teaching students to decode.
- Several studies (Goswami 1986, 1990; Trieman, 1985) found that reading words by analogy develops earlier than reading words by sequential (letter by letter) decoding.
- The more print words children recognize, the better children are able to make analogies between letter strings representing onsets and rime (Ehri & Robbins, 1992).
- The ability to make analogies (e.g., from *cat* to *mat*, *smile* to *vile*, *table* to *stable*, *beak* to *peak*) eliminates the need for the child to blend phonemes in the rimes of new words because the blended rimes are supplied by the reader's memory for the known words. Because blending is known to be a difficult operation, this ability leads to more efficient word recognition (Ehri & Robins, 1992).

Based on these findings, focusing on onsets and rimes can help children develop phonemic awareness and learn to make analogies between spelling patterns in words to help them read new words. At the same time, in order to divide words into onsets and rimes, children are learning to understand how letters symbolize sounds and how to blend parts of known words with parts of new words (Erhi & Robbins, 1992). For example, a child who can read *cat*, can more easily learn to read *bat*, *sat*, *mat*, *pat*, and *that*.

If this sounds a lot like a Dr. Seuss story, it is not a coincidence. Reading books that emphasize sounds, such as nursery rhymes and Dr. Seuss books, has provided a scaffold for many children to "teach themselves to read." Rather than needing phonics knowledge in order to begin to read texts, there is a great deal of evidence that there is a reciprocal relationship between reading, writing, word play, and phonics knowledge; that is, each one facilitates and reinforces the other (Perfitti, Beck, Bell, & Hughes, 1987; Weaver, 1997).

Instead of memorizing lists of words, a task that can be daunting for young children, children can develop a core group of high-frequency words through reading predictable texts. Wylie and Durrell's research (cited in Hiebert, 1997) found that 37 rimes account for 500 words that occur in primary-level text, though their frequencies varied:

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ack | ain | ake | ale | ame | an | ank | ap | ash | at | ate | aw |
| ay | eat | ell | est | ice | ick | ide | ight | ill | in | ine | ing |
| ink | ip | ir | ock | oke | op | or | ore | uck | ug | ump | unk |

Martin and Hiebert (1997) demonstrated that "initially struggling readers who became successful readers during first grade knew few words by mid-year, but once they had acquired a core group of high-frequency words, they progressed rapidly in their word recognition skills." An example by Gaskins, Gaskins, and Gaskins (1991) shows one way that children can be helped to accomplish this task. The researchers used an explicit instruction program to teach children to use analogies to decode words. Calling their method "compare/contrast," children are taught through modeling, guided practice, and teacher feedback. Children are told what they will be taught, why it is important, when it can be used, and how to use it. The authors describe Tom, a nonreader in the second grade, who had poor receptive and expressive language skills, and who had participated in the program for several months. While reading a predictable book, he came upon a word he did not know how to pronounce. To the "teacher's amazement," he declared:

> "I know the pair/trast strategy. I know table; this is stable!" This was the first time that Tom had used the compare/contrast strategy independently, and it was truly a breakthrough for him as a reader. He now had a way to decode unknown words. Tom himself seemed to realize the value of the strategy, for he promptly used it again in the second sentence to figure out sty. He said, "I know cry, so this is sty" (p. 221).

## Metacognition and the Effective Use of Strategies

Children who have a range of flexible strategies to use when they are stuck on a word are able to take an active approach to solving problems encountered in the reading process. When learning is viewed as understanding, an important element of a reading program is to help children become aware of how they go about their thinking and learning (metacognition). Key to a metacognitive approach is the flexible use of strategies. Speigel (1995) explains:

> Skills are used in a reflexive manner whereas strategy usage involves conscious selection of an approach to solve a problem. Effective strategy utilization is metacognitive. The learner knows a problem exists, identifies the problem, and puts into effect a fix-up strategy to bypass or solve the problem.

Learning to read, Weaver (1997) points out, "involves developing strategies for making sense of text." Teachers can model strategies by thinking out loud, which in turn helps children to internalize these mental models. A kindergarten teacher reported that she saw a big change in children's ability to write when she began to use this strategy: "It is not all right for me as a teacher to write without talking. Children need to see me thinking through the process. I model my thinking, and I see them learning to think about letters and sounds" (Freppon & Dahl, 1991). In addition to teaching children to use analogies based on onset and rime, a number of strategies are recommended by reading specialists:

- Look at the picture and the first letter of the word
- Look for a known chunk or small word (e.g., *child* in *children*)
- Read the word using only the beginning and ending sounds
- Think of a word that looks like the difficult word
- Find the small word in the big word (e.g., *bathroom*)
- Find the ending or beginning of a word in the main word (e.g., play*ing*, *re*pay)
- Skip the word and read to the end of the sentence
- Substitute a word that makes sense—Think about the story, does the word you are using make sense? Does it look right, does it sound right?
- Link to prior knowledge
- Predict and anticipate what could come next
- Read the passage several times for fluency and meaning
- Write words you can't figure out and need to know on "Post-it" notes
- Go back to the beginning of the sentence and try again
- Read the word without the vowels

It is important to reiterate that these are strategies that are used by *beginning* readers. Although proficient readers may use only a few of these strategies during reading, these strategies play an important role in helping young children learn to decode words fluently and automatically. While traditional approaches to phonics instruction require children to decode every word with a letter-

by-letter method, research (discussed previously) shows that adults as well as children tend to read unfamiliar words in pronounceable chunks, not letter by letter. Weaver (1997) points out that when the emphasis is on decoding every word, "Many children just never become genuine readers. They give up, even if we don't give up on them. And we often do."

**Decodable texts.** Although approximately 80 percent of children learn to read with minimal difficulty, about 20 percent need more intensive explicit instruction (Weaver, 1997). Some researchers suggest that struggling readers should learn to read with phonetically regular texts (decodable texts) that highlight a particular feature of a word, such as "Dad had a bad fan," should be used for early readers. However, decodable texts are often very difficult to read because, as Sampson (1997) points out, "they leave only one strategy for the reader (decoding by sound/symbol). When that fails, the reader has nothing to fall back upon."

For example, a child would be able to make little sense of this passage from a decodable text: "A seed is in the sea. The seed and the sea play. The sea can plant the seed." Weaver (1997) provides this example of an 11-year-old child attempting to read a decodable text: "Gail and Ben cannot go home. The light is wide. I can mim bake a boat said Ben. You the Gail said Gail. The Gail is big is Ben. Pete/boat/not make a pail boat. Ben they said boat boat said Gail."

Clearly, this child did not even expect this text to make sense. When children must read texts that sacrifice meaning for phonetic regularity, they may not only become bored and frustrated, but also fail to learn that reading can be a meaningful, enjoyable activity. While literary merit should not be the only criteria for text selection, most researchers agree that texts should fit the expectations of readers regarding stories and that they should make sense. Research suggests that American students' problems in learning to read are due to a lack of automaticity, not a lack of fundamental skills. To apply knowledge automatically requires experience with numerous texts (Hiebert, 1997). Poor readers, in particular, need to be taught a range of flexible strategies and have access to numerous texts that scaffold their reading. It may take children with few prior experiences numerous experiences with texts to focus on critical features and remember them (Hiebert, 1997).

### Children Identified with Reading Problems

Research has shown that programs that identify at-risk children in the first grade and begin intervention before a history of failure has set in can provide children with the experiences they need to be successful at school. Effects of programs for students who begin after first grade are much less significant (Slavin, Karweit, & Wasik, 1993; Speigel, 1995). The report by the National Reading Research Council (1998) concluded that:

> There is little evidence that children experiencing difficulties learning to read, even those with identifiable learning disabilities, need radically different sorts of supports than children at low risk, although they may need more intensive support. Childhood environments that support early literacy development and excellent instruction are important for all children. Excellent instruction is the best intervention for children who demonstrate problems learning to read.

In their review of intervention programs, Slavin and his colleagues (1993) identified a strategy that stands out from all others in effectiveness: one-on-one tutoring beginning in the first grade for children identified with reading problems. Although all forms of individualized tutoring were more effective than any other reading strategy, tutoring by certified teachers was the most beneficial.

Juel (1996) explored factors that may account for successful tutoring outcomes in one-on-one tutoring situations. In her study, she paired university students who were poor readers with struggling first-grade readers. She found that "words matter" and that four types of activities and interactions were particularly important:

- Reading text that gradually and repetitively introduced both high-frequency vocabulary and words with common spelling patterns
- Receiving direct instruction about the letter/sound relationships with words
- Being helped to identify and spell words through numerous interactions scaffolded by a tutor
- Hearing the tutor's words as that tutor modeled how to identify or spell unknown words

### Summary of Strategies to Facilitate Decoding

There are a number of ways that teachers can directly help children develop phonics knowledge that they can use in reading and writing. Weaver, Gillmeister-Krause, and Vento-Zogby (1996) offer these suggestions. Many of these suggestions have been discussed earlier; they are presented here to serve as a summary:

- Read and reread favorite nursery rhymes to reinforce the sound patterns of the language, and enjoy tongue-twisters and other forms of language play together.
- Read aloud to children from Big Books or charts large enough for all children in the group or class to see the print easily. Run a pointer or your hand or finger under the words to help children make the association between spoken words and written words.
- Part of the time, choose Big Books and/or make charts of stories, poems, and rhymes that make interesting use of alliteration, rhyme, and onomatopoeia.
- When sharing Big Books or charts, focus children's attention on the beginnings and ends of words. It is helpful to focus on elements that alliterate and rhyme before focusing on individual sounds.
- The most effective and efficient phonics instruction focuses children's attention on noticing onsets and rimes. During the discussion of onsets and rimes, you and the children can make charts of words with the same sound pattern (to help children use analogies to read new words).
- Read alphabet books with children, and make alphabet books together.
- Read with children other books that emphasize sound—books such as *Noisy Poems,* edited by Jill Bennett; *Deep Down Underground,* by Oliver Dunrea; and Dr. Seuss books. Comment on sounds.
- When reading together, help children use prior knowledge and context plus initial consonants to predict what a word will be; then look at the rest of the word to confirm or correct.

- Talk about letters and sounds as you write messages to children and as you help them compose something together or individually. This is a very important way of helping children begin to hear individual sounds in words as well as learn to spell some of the words they write.
- Help children notice print in their environment—signs, labels, and other print.
- When children demonstrate in their attempts at writing that they realize letters represent sounds, help them individually to write the sounds they hear in words.
- Provide tape recordings of many reading selections for children to listen to as they follow along with the written text. It helps to provide small copies of the text, not just a Big Book or chart.

It is important to remember that phonics, as Routman (1994) reminds us, is not an end in itself; it is a necessary but insufficient condition for learning to read (Braunger & Lewis, 1997; Stanovich, 1986). Increases in vocabulary growth and concept knowledge are strongly correlated with reading and being read to; therefore, concentration on isolated skills (for later assembly into the whole) may increase the risk of reading failure. When children spend large amounts of time learning isolated skills, such as decoding, they may initially score well on standardized tests that measure these skills. However, after grade three there is no longer a strong relationship between phonics knowledge and reading proficiency (Chall, 1983). After that time, comprehension increasingly depends on vocabulary, concept knowledge, and verbal reasoning.

Healy (1990) observes that "coming to grips with verbal logic, wrestling one's mind into submission to an author's unfamiliar point of view, and struggling to make connections appear to be particularly taxing to today's young intellects" (p. 25). During the early elementary school years, children need many experiences with oral and written language to build a strong foundation for thinking, imagining, interpreting, synthesizing, and creating. Gaining phonics knowledge in the context of meaningful reading, writing, and word play activities helps children use this knowledge to read fluently and automatically.

### Teaching Reading Using Tulalip Literature at Tulalip Elementary, Marysville, Washington

*The Tulalip-Based curriculum is the result of a partnership between the school district and the tribe. On the school's Web site, David Cort, a fourth-grade teacher at Tulalip, describes how the curriculum is designed to help students reach Washington benchmarks through the use of the Tulalip language and culture:*

We will ensure that students in the Tulalip-based Classroom are prepared to meet state benchmarks in reading, but we will teach to these standard benchmarks using our local first literature. Teachers will draw on the rich literary tradition of the Puget Sound for the reading texts that students will use to practice reading skills. Tulalip Elementary uses the Success For All (SFA) reading program which allows schools to use a variety of literatures as long as they create learning materials and use learning activities in line with the program.

I have had excellent success using Tulalip stories with students in my SFA class. The students themselves create their literature textbook, listening to traditional stories and planning how to illustrate them; then drawing the illustrations; and finally reading the stories, discussing them and mastering reading skills from them. I develop the reading guides for the stories, called "Treasure Hunts," using the SFA guidelines. An additional benefit to creating our own Treasure Hunts is that we can include more higher level thinking questions than in typical Treasure Hunts.

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**Teaching multicultural literacy: Special features of Tulalip literature.** In addition to meeting the standard benchmarks we will also expose students to the special features of Tulalip literature that are not noted by the state. Some of these features are special to oral literatures, and so tend to be overlooked when developing reading standards. Repetition is one such feature. In many oral literatures, like Tulalip literature, the artful use of repetition not only lends beauty to a story; it also helps listeners remember the story better, and makes listeners attend to patterns in the story.

In Western literary tradition, repetition is often viewed as tedious, and so translators of Native stories sometimes condense action and leave out repetitions that they feel are unnecessary or tiresome for the audience. In the Tulalip-Based Classroom we will teach students to value repetition as a special feature of Tulalip stories, and so teach them to recognize and appreciate repetition.

**Moving toward a Tulalip approach to reading**. A further goal in the Tulalip-Based Classroom is not only to use Tulalip literature to advance the standard curriculum, it is to move toward a Tulalip approach to reading and story. It is one thing to include Lushootseed stories in our reading curriculum and use them to teach the skills required in the standard curriculum. I believe there is value in this, and that Puget Sound stories can form the basis of a strong reading curriculum that prepares students for the state benchmarks.

But that is not really learning to read in a Lushootseed way. We need to ask ourselves, what is the traditional Lushootseed way of "reading"? And since reading a written text was not a traditional skill, we need to expand and adapt our concept of reading. What was the traditional way an audience responded to a story? Why were stories told? Can we incorporate any of these elements into a Tulalip reading program? Does the story in such a program need to be presented orally?

Through discussions with staff at the Cultural Resources Department I have developed a list of some components we might need to include in a Tulalip-based reading curriculum:

- Readers need to learn to appreciate form in literature as well as content. This means we cannot present stories as a summary of events and omit repetition and circular figures. The formulaic features are an essential part of the Lushootseed story and may not be abridged.
- Traditional stories were told so that listeners would live their lives differently as a result of hearing the story.
- Traditional stories were told again and again, and readers developed deeper insights with each hearing. Thus, students need to be trained to patiently hold onto questions, realizing that answers come over a long period of time. In the traditional mindset, a listener is not deserving of knowledge simply because he or she wants to know the answer to a question.

**Some thoughts on storytelling in the Tulalip-based classroom.** If we are to move toward including a Tulalip approach to reading and story, it will mean wrestling with how to include traditional storytelling in the school environment. The traditional approach to story asks the audience to listen again and again to retellings of a story. One reason we have difficulty using this approach in school is because school follows the written tradition, and in the written tradition we read from a fixed text instead of orally retelling stories.

A retelling is differently told or differently nuanced with each retelling, with each new occasion and audience. This makes the story fresh and new even though the audience has heard the story before. The audience is listening for and enjoying the fresh turns in each retelling. Repeatedly rereading a fixed text does not create the same type of experience for listeners. How can school approximate the storytelling experience, by providing a new, fresh experience for story retellings?

Source: Tulalip Elementary Web site, written by David Cort:
http://www.msvl.wednet.edu/elementary/tulalip_site/index.htm

## Dictating and Acting Out Stories

> *Stories that are not acted out are fleeting dreams; private fantasies, disconnected and unexamined. If in the press of a busy day, I am tempted to shorten the process by only reading the stories aloud and skipping the dramatizations, the children object. They say, "But we haven't done the story yet."* (Paley, 1990, p. 25)

Just as reading a story requires the reader to *enter* an imaginary world, writing a story requires the writer to *create* an imaginary world. For young children, writing is often an arduous task. A young writer must be able to physically manipulate a pencil and reproduce print from memory in order to say what he or she has to say (Cooper, 1993). Although learning to write independently is an important goal in the primary years, dictating stories eliminates the necessity to learn everything at once; children's emerging narrative voice can be temporarily freed from the constraints of the mechanics of writing.

Teachers act as scribes, writing children's words as they dictate them, listening carefully for the narrative thread, and helping children clarify their thoughts. As these stories are reread by the author and his or her classmates, children begin to match the remembered words with the printed ones. Dictating stories to an attentive adult can help children develop their storytelling ability and develop an understanding of how sound maps onto print. When adults write down children's stories as children tell them, children learn that:

- What they say can be written down
- What is written down can be read
- What others say can be written down
- They can read what others write down

Opportunities to participate in both individual and group dictation, sometimes referred to as the language experience approach, are particularly effective for children learning English as a second language (Roberts, 1994). In addition to creating stories, students and teachers can share an experience, such as a visit to a museum or a beach. Together, they discuss the experience, and the teacher writes children's observations and descriptions on the board or chart pack. After writing several sentences, the teacher asks the students to read what they have all just written together. These activities help to integrate all aspects of literacy: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Most importantly, they help children develop their own narrative voice.
Patsy Cooper writes:

> Each teacher must strive to know who the children are who have come to share their very lives with her. In every way possible, her classroom and curriculum must make room for each one of the children's stories, for only then will the children be free to trust teachers, and, thus, free to learn (1993, p. 8)

Storytelling is an important first step toward becoming a writer and is a strong predictor of literacy (Engel, 1997). Children who may feel uncomfortable with the written word may be quite adept at storytelling. According to the National Council of Teachers of English (1997), "The comfort zone of the oral tale can be the path by which they reach the written one."

Children's storytelling can be enriched by stories of all kinds—poetry, songs, trade books, Big Books, fairy tales, children's own dramatic play, and reading each others' stories. Engel suggests three kinds of experiences that promote storytelling ability during the early years:

- Having conversations—plenty of them, and long ones—with adults
- Talking about the past and the future, even before the child can do this on her own
- Hearing and participating in stories of all kinds (1997, p. 8)

Engel observes, "The richer the repertoire of storytelling styles a child is exposed to, the more possibilities for that child to develop his or her own powerful narrative voice, one that reflects both his community, his family, and his inner life" (1997, p. 9).

### How to Get Started with Dictation

Story starters, such as asking for a dream or an adventure, using a picture (one that the child draws or paints or a photograph or painting), or merely prompting with "once upon a time," can help children get started. Dramatic play offers an especially rich source of stories that can be incorporated into storytelling activities, particularly group storytelling (Soundy & Genisio, 1994). When teachers observe children's play, they can record interesting and entertaining incidents to use during storytelling. For example, in a group setting, teachers can remind children of a previously observed dramatization of a picnic, a voyage to outer space, or a monster's invasion of the school. Props such as puppets, flannel boards, and music help spur children's imagination; pillows and mats can add to the relaxed, collaborative atmosphere that encourages genuine sharing (Soundy & Genisio).

**Acting out stories**. Teachers can strengthen the dramatic play/storytelling connection by encouraging children to act out their own dictated stories and the stories they hear in the classroom. Glazer (1989) suggests the use of paper-bag prop stories to stimulate acting out stories:

> Put a book familiar to the children in each of three to five different paper bags. Fasten the book jacket or a photocopy of one picture from the book onto the front of the bag. Put props associated with each story into the appropriate bag. Props should represent story objects, settings, characters, sequence, and other elements important for the child's role playing (p. 23).

Both spontaneous story acting and teacher-guided story acting help children connect literacy with play. Acting out stories, both child- and adult-authored:

- Brings stories to life—enhancing story recall, imagination, and emergent story reading
- Encourages the creative use of language
- Gives children the opportunity to sort out problems and concerns
- Helps children make the transition from oral to written language

Teachers who have encouraged these activities are enthusiastic about both the process and the learning outcomes for children. Tom Drummond, instructor at North Seattle Community College, writes:

> I wholeheartedly recommend that every early childhood program do this regularly with children. It is an almost guaranteed way to elicit from children their natural interest in learning to write narrative stories, illustrate them with drawings, dramatize them in collaboration with others, and read them to anyone who will listen.

## Opportunities to Write, With Various Levels of Support

> *The written language puzzle is a complex one. And as, with most puzzles, children cannot solve it by being given only one piece at a time.* (Dyson, 1982)

Just as research on emergent literacy has focused our attention on the interrelatedness of oral and written language, this same research has demonstrated the strong relationship between reading and writing. Like talking and listening, reading and writing are inseparable processes, each one informing and transforming the other (Learning Media, 1992; Sweet, 1993). Holdaway (cited in Learning Media, 1992) comments:

> Instruction has persistently separated reading from writing in a way that would be insufferable in learning to listen and talk. The two modes form an integral nexus of learning around common processes, and this, too, may be readily reflected in teaching. There are no logical or practical excuses for the dismemberment of literacy—only instructional precedents (p. 10).

Research shows that when reading and writing are taught together, the benefits are greater than when they are taught separately. When children write words, they attend to the details of those words. In this way, writing leads to improved phonemic awareness and word recognition, which in turn lead to improved reading. When children read, they attend to the linguistic features, vocabulary, and structures of written language that they learn to incorporate into their writing. Bearse (1992) found that in her study in which third-grade children read and discussed fairytales, then wrote their own fairytales, the children internalized the cadences, rhythms, and particular phrases characteristic of fairytales. They also borrowed from the stories they read, sometimes unconsciously blending several stories into their own.

An example from a Camas, Washington, classroom that had been studying fables illustrates how children incorporate the language patterns of literature into their own stories. The children in this second-grade classroom were encouraged to use developmental spelling in first drafts and in their journals:

> Chapter 1: Why do dogs chas CATS?
> Once apan a time in a far away land thar was a yung cat and Tow kitins. One day a dog came. But in this land dogs don't chas cats thaey like cats. And the dog saw the kitins and wanted to play with them so he askt the yung cat. And He said NO! so the dog got mad and foght. So for now on thay set a egsampel for ether dogs.

## Beginnings

But long before children can express their thoughts with such sophistication, children are, in Durkin's words, "paper and pencil kinds—they scribble, copy letters of the alphabet, and write the names of friends and family members (cited in Dyson, 1982). Stine (1980) found that among preschoolers, writing was the most popular beginning reading activity. In these first attempts at writing, children explore how written language works—"how meaning is conveyed through, and retrieved from, print" (Dyson). Young children often mix drawing and writing; they may assign meaning after writing, and they may express surprise that what they have written is not what they intended. Dyson provides these two examples of conversations with two five-year-old children who have just written a string of letters:

> "Is this a word, Mom?" asked five-year-old Chad.
> "No, that's not a word, Chad."
> "Well, when's it gonna be a word, Mom? And another thing, if it's a bad word, are you gonna get mad at me?"

> Sance: Guess what this spells? (*Sance has written* Loeed).
> Dyson: What does it spell?
> Sance: You gotta guess it.
> Dyson: Okay. *Lo-eed.*
> Sance: Huh?
> Dyson: *Loeed.*
> Sance: (*with surprise*) That's not my dog's name.

Clearly, at this point, both Sance and Chad have a great deal of work to do before they have a working understanding of the relationship between spoken and printed words. How do Sance and Chad become the second- or third-graders who solve age-old problems regarding animal behavior, create their own poems and fairytales, and write letters to pen pals? The answer, based on research in literature-based classrooms, is the opportunity to engage in many meaningful reading and writing activities (Dahl & Freppon, 1995; Purcell-Gates, McIntyre, & Freppon, 1995). While traditional writing lessons have focused on neatness and correct spelling and letter formation, research on emergent literacy has drawn our attention to the paramount importance of meaning and purpose in the process of learning to write.

Through writing, children gain understanding of the written language system, of the relationship between print and oral language. As the two previous examples illustrate, young children's understandings of our language system are often very different from adult perspectives. Griffith and Leavell (1995) observe:

> Children's initial explorations with written language will lead them to understand that a written word has characteristics separate from the characteristics of the "thing" it represents. One six-year-old was astonished that the letters "o" and "x" were read as "ox" because, as he explained, "That word isn't big enough to be ox." The child had not yet grasped the symbol system of written English (p. 85).

The use of developmental spelling helps children solve the puzzle of how print maps onto sound. In addition, in their early attempts at writing, children learn to detect similarities and differences between the ways that various sounds are produced, and spelling, rather than random letters, becomes phonetic (Gough, 1997; Schickedanz, 1986). When children are able to express their thoughts while using their best phonetic spelling, they can focus on using language to communicate. Because thinking is, of course, crucial to good writing, both writing and thinking benefit when young children are encouraged to concentrate on the content of writing rather than the form or mechanics of writing (Sweet, 1993). In *Dancing with the Pen* (1992), the authors explain: "Allowing children to attempt spelling enables them to use vocabulary from their oral language which then flows on into their writing. Spelling is functional—it enables writers to express meaning. It is therefore, a tool for writing, not a barrier to the writing process" (p. 59).

Teachers can encourage young children to move to standard spelling by modeling writing and providing an environment rich in opportunities to explore purposeful and meaningful print. Walls filled with print—charts, posters, children's work, poems and songs on chart pack, and word cards with frequently used words—provide many ways for children to learn the standard spelling of a word. Dictionaries of various sizes and degrees of complexity and "banks" of juicy words (adjectives and verbs) help children to be confident and independent writers. In this way, children learn spelling in the context of writing. Teachers can also target words from children's draft writing for additional practice; targeted words should be those that children consistently spell almost correctly. However, even intermediate-age children often use invented spelling in a first draft, using standard spelling when their writing is for others.

**"Writing floats on a sea of talk."** In the early elementary years, it is the child's narrative voice that must find its way into the classroom. Vickie Spandel (1996) describes voice as the "writer coming through the writing. It is the heart and soul of writing, the magic, the wit, the feeling, the life and breath. . . . At the primary level, voice is first noticeable in speaking, oral storytelling, and art" (pp. 11-15). By building on these competencies, teachers can help children develop their writing voice as well. "Writing floats on a sea of talk," reminds Britton (1970). By talking to each other about their work, bouncing ideas off each other, and helping each other solve problems, children learn to consider the needs of their audience, to think critically, and to connect their concerns with academic learning (Dyson, 1987). Dyson found that in her studies of young children's collaborative story writing, "the most elaborate verbal stories and the most flexible manipulation of narrative time and space occurred, not in the texts themselves, but in the children's talk" (p. 415).

### What to Write

Opportunities to write are limited only by the imaginations of children and teachers. Children can write individually and in groups; they can write in functional ways by making lists, charts, labels, calendars, and using sign-in sheets. They can write creatively by writing:

- Stories for publishing
- Letters

- Wall stories (in which children retell an adult story or create a new story and illustrate it on large paper)
- Big Books (an original narrative, or based on an adult-written book)
- Poetry, newspapers, and stories for publication
- In journals—about daily experiences, an adventure, a dream, a fantasy, a feeling, or to solve a problem
- Throughout the day in literacy-enhanced learning centers
- In response to art or to stories read or listened to
- For research projects

While some topics can be teacher-directed, choice is an important part of writing. In *Dancing with the Pen* (1992, p. 27), the authors suggests that when learners choose topics successfully, they will:

- Value firsthand experience and their own knowledge
- Make use of their surroundings, both inside and outside school
- Discuss their ideas freely
- Research their ideas in a variety of ways
- Adapt and make use of their own and others' material and suggestions
- Show initiative in selecting their own topics for writing
- Feel confident enough to muse on selecting a topic

By modeling writing and thinking out loud while doing so, teachers can help children learn to think about not only letters and sounds but also how writers go about the task of thinking of what to say and how to say it.

### Supporting the Writing Effort

Young children exhibit a wide range of proficiency in writing in the same ways they do with reading. While some kindergarten children's writing may consist primarily of drawing intermixed with a few letters, others may be writing full paragraphs. But all children can be successful when goals are individualized and when their efforts are supported. Teachers can support children's writing in a number of ways. Teachers who model thinking and writing can help children learn to think about letters and sounds and to see how writers go about the task of thinking of what to say and how to say it (Freppon & Dahl, 1991).

Before children can write independently, they need a variety of demonstrations, as well as many opportunities to write with varying levels of support. In *Guided Reading, Good First Teaching for All Children,* Fountas and Pinnell (1996) describe four levels of support for writing:

- In shared writing, the teacher acts as a scribe while children dictate stories, although children may also do some of the writing.
- In interactive writing, all children participate in composing a large-print piece, which can be a list, a chart, pages of a book, or another form of writing. Teachers provide a high level of support with models and demonstrations, but individual children are involved in the writing.
- In guided writing or writing workshop, mini-lessons are provided on a variety of aspects of writing in group and individual settings. Individual conferences provide selected feedback.
- In independent writing, children use each other and the room as resources, with little teacher guidance.

**The writing process.** While extensive revision of written work can be a laborious task for young children, children of all ages can be encouraged to publish some of their work. New Zealand educators have noted that "where publication has not been part of the writing program, or has been treated in a casual manner, there has been a general lack of interest in writing" (Learning Media, 1992, p.72). At Cherry Valley Elementary School in Polson, Montana, the writing process is described as a recursive process that starts with sharing and enjoying, and progresses through a flexible process that includes: the idea, a draft, editing, a closer look, publishing, and sharing and enjoying.

Sharing and enjoying are critical aspects of writing. When children read and write their own stories and read those of other children, they share ideas and opinions and extend each others' stories (Dyson, 1987). In the process, they not only gain a sense of themselves as writers, but their reading comprehension is also enhanced. Several studies have found that children comprehend and make inferences better when reading child-authored texts than when reading textbooks (Sampson, 1997). Daiute (1985, cited in Cummins, 1986) observes:

> Children who learn early that writing is not simply an exercise gain a sense of power that gives them confidence to write—and write a lot. . . . Beginning writers who are confident that they have something to say or that they can find out what they need to know overcome some limits of training or development. Writers who don't feel that what they say matters have an additional burden that no skills training can help them overcome (pp. 5-6).

By validating children's oral storytelling, art, and writing—and helping children connect writing with their prior knowledge and experience—teachers can help each child develop his or her own narrative voice.

## Using Projects to Integrate Literacy Into All Aspects of the Classroom, Including Visual Art and Music

*We cannot know through language what we cannot imagine. The image—visual, tactile, auditory—plays a crucial role in the construction of meaning through text. Those who cannot imagine cannot read.* (Eisner, 1992, p. 125)

Eleanor Duckworth has said that the development of intelligence is "a matter of having wonderful ideas and feeling confident enough to try them out" (1972, p. 227). Proponents of an integrated curriculum strive to create such a classroom environment by encouraging active, engaged learning through open-ended discussion and multiple modes of inquiry. Brain research demonstrates that the mind is designed to perceive patterns and relationships and works best when learning takes place in the context of meaningful activities. Teachers who integrate curricular approaches encourage children to bring all of their intelligences and experiences to the learning activity.

Although verbal/linguistic intelligence and logical/mathematical intelligence have dominated the traditional pedagogy of western societies, Howard Gardner of Harvard University suggests that there are at least seven human intelligences. In addition to logical/mathematical and verbal intelligence, he includes: spatial, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Proponents of an educational approach that encourages the development of multiple intelligences argue that when students are able to specialize and excel in at least one area, discipline problems are reduced and academic and cooperative learning skills improve. Because each child learns the subject matter in a variety of different ways, chances of understanding and retaining the information are multiplied (Campbell, 1989).

**Young Authors' Conference**
**Naval Avenue Elementary, Bremerton, Washington**

The annual Young Authors' Conference is a one-day event dedicated to writing that also involves parents and community members in meaningful ways. In the morning children are placed into small, multiage groups with a teacher or volunteer. Each student reads to the group a published piece that they've written and the group discusses and complements it. The teacher also reads one of his or her own favorite stories or writings. The students love sharing their published pieces, and the younger ones are especially proud to show their work to older kids. Many of the older students share a piece they wrote about their experience in the DARE program, which provides a positive anti-drug model to the younger students.

In the afternoon, students choose and sign up for two different workshop sessions. Funding for materials has been provided through Title I and CSRD grants. Volunteers from around the community, parents and all teachers and staff from the school (including the custodian and PE teacher!) put on workshops. Volunteers are encouraged to present any activity that interests them, and past workshops have included cooking, weaving, puppetry, storytelling, origami, gardening, science experiments, and family and cultural traditions. "The workshops bring in community volunteers with interesting avocations to share with our students," explains Julie Wasserburger, a teacher who helps to plan the event. "Children are exposed to community role models with a variety of cultural backgrounds," and people who have never volunteered before are now getting involved.

## Linking Literature With Art

For children who have trouble engaging with a text, linking art and literacy is critical. True engagement involves the ability to enter into the world of the story—to imagine a setting, to interpret a plot, to build relationships with characters, to visualize or "see" what is being read. Readers who cannot visualize their reading are unlikely to want to read (Eisner, 1992; Enciso, 1992; Wilhelm, 1995). One frustrated young reader, when asked his thoughts on a reading

assignment, exploded: "I can't think about it, talk about it, do anything about it, if I can't see it!" (Wilhelm, p. 476). Asking children to create visual art as a response to reading and to write stories as a response to visual art helps children build rich mental models as they learn to read and write.

Looking at, talking about, and reflecting on visual artwork helps children develop aesthetic sensitivity. They learn that art consists of symbols that communicate ideas, experiences and feelings that can be shared (Honigman & Bhavnagri, 1998). In a thematic study of reading and great artists, children in second-grade teacher Jane Kolakowski's class listen to and read stories about artists' lives and work. In their projects, children develop and refine the visual senses and extend their understanding of story elements by first discussing and exploring paintings, and then imagining that they can enter a painting. One seven-year-old wrote (using developmental spelling) the following in response to the painting *Stafford Heights* by Garl Melchers:

> I smell grain in the field. not that many houses are around. There are many trees. It is sunny and there is a dirt path. There's a field on a hill. It is bright outside the air is sweet the trees smell lik pinecones. There are no flowers here. My mouth waters when I tast sweet graps. You can not hear the birds singging. You can feel a breeze. You can't see anyone outside. The wind plays tug-of war with my hair (Kolakowski, 1995, p. 28).

Kolakowski comments that the insight and maturity expressed in the metaphor of the last sentence is brought out by the child's interaction with art:

> The study verifies for me the research of Elliot Eisner (1992) in which he writes that the arts' contribution is its offer to everyone of an ability to feel and participate in the lives of others. Art is communication with oneself and others. Art unites the rational and the emotional. . . . I want my students to feel, to dream, and to know that they have something to share with the world. This is the process that art study begins (p. 35).

### "Poetry Is Like Directions for Your Imagination"

While poetry is often used to teach new words and to promote phonemic awareness, few primary classrooms provide opportunities for children to study poetry in its own right (Denman, 1988; Duthie & Zimet, 1992). However, children's natural ability to attune to rhyming patterns, cadences, sounds, and metaphoric imagery can be enhanced by early experiences with reading and writing poetry. After completing a successful unit on poetry, first-grade teachers Duthie and Zimet concluded that, "It is a genre that is not only accessible to primary children, but can be the genre that excites children and motivates them to read and write" (p. 14). "Poetry," one child concluded, "is like directions for your imagination."

Utilizing the expertise of local writers can help both teachers and children get started. NWREL editor/writer Tony Kneidek has found that young children—even those who have had little experience with poetry—respond enthusiastically to an approach that includes reading, discussing, writing, and illustrating poems. In his workshops, he often begins by talking about his own interest in poetry and learning about the interests and experiences of the children. After reading and discussing several poems written by poets as diverse in their style and content as Maya Angelou, Shel Silversteen, Dr. Seuss, and Countee Cullen, he then introduces a prop to help children brainstorm (as a group) a number of descriptive words that they then incorporate into individually written poems.

In a recent poetry workshop with first- and second-graders, children generated an imaginative list of words to describe the taste, feel, smell, sounds, and sights of wind chimes. The children's words were transcribed in large letters to a chart pack. Then the children selected and arranged the words into whatever form and order they wanted to create their own poems. "The beauty of the exercise," Kneidek says, "is that there is no way they can do anything wrong, and they know this." While many of the words used in the poems are the same, the children's writing reflects their own feelings, thoughts, and imagination.

### The Project Approach and the Inquiry Model

The project approach (Katz & Chard, 1989) and the inquiry model (Wills, 1995), like more traditional thematic units, provide opportunities for children to learn about a topic. However, unlike thematic units, which usually consist of preplanned lessons, teachers using a project or inquiry approach "plan for possibilities." Depth of understanding, rather than seeking correct answers to questions posed by the teacher, is the goal of a research project. Copenhaver (1997) points out, "Two people cannot have a dialogue with each other if one of them is asking the questions. Yet the mandated curriculum is loaded with someone else's voice asking all of the questions and demanding all of the answers" (p. 1).

In the inquiry model of learning, the teacher's role moves from interrogator to a collaborator in joint inquiry. The ability to ask meaningful questions and formulate alternative solutions is critical to the higher-order literacy demanded by today's society. Healy (1990) comments, "In order to analyze problems and evaluate alternatives, children need active practice asking and attempting to answer their own questions. Too much teacher talk gets in the way of such higher-level reasoning because it prevents children from doing their own thinking!" (p. 96).

Rather than standardized, predetermined outcomes, the goal of an integrated curriculum that emphasizes projects is what Eisner (1991) refers to as "productive unpredictability—creative thinking" (p. 103). Not only reading and writing, but play, visual art, music, dance, drama, observation, and investigation provide multiple ways for children to "get to the heart of a subject." Wills (1995) contrasts an integrated, inquiry-driven curriculum with a traditional prescriptive approach to teaching in which learning is viewed from a linear perspective "much like a train racing along a railroad track":

> The course is predetermined and no detours are allowed. The only variable is the speed with which the journey is made. An unusually quick trip denotes a child whose learning ability is above grade level; an on-time arrival denotes a child at grade level. All educators are familiar with the many labels for those who arrive late. Of course, many of those late arrivals never complete the trip, eventually choosing to jump from the train (p. 262).

**Choosing a project.** To enhance children's ability to make sense of their world, projects should be relevant to their lives outside the classroom, drawing from children's knowledge, interests, and experience. Choices of projects for young children are limited only by time, resources, and the collective imagination of the classroom. Global themes—change, freedom, relationships, patterns, communication, and others—are especially well-suited to integration. Once a topic has

been selected, teachers and children brainstorm what they think they know about the topic and what they want to know. Making a "web" or a concept map—a mental representation of concepts and relationships—helps extend the theme and provides an overview of resources and activities that can aid in the investigation.

Topics are explored from multiple perspectives using a variety of printed information, manipulable materials, and resources from the community—people, animals, and places—that contribute to children's understanding of a theme (Pappas, Keifer, & Levstik, 1990). Opportunities for children to express themselves in multiple languages—visual art, music, drama, dance—are particularly important for children from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Projects that free children from the need to express themselves only in words help to build concepts and bridge language differences (Abramson, Robinson, & Ankenman, 1995).

Exploring the local community can help children understand the region they live in and can serve as the basis for integrating skills in math, science, art, history, and language arts (Rowe & Probst, 1995). A district Indian Education Coordinator observes:

> I think that the language, the local language should be a part of the curriculum of the district. I think that there are ways to build some of the history and the culture into classroom activities and the classroom curriculum. In science and the environmental sciences you could be talking about fishing, and waters, and all of those kinds of things that are local here so that you can relate to what they're talking about.

**Research support for a strong arts program.** A growing body of research suggests that art and music support children's overall development (Boss, 1999). In particular, spatial reasoning—a skill critical for success in science and math—may be enhanced by musical experiences. According to a University of California at Irvine study, three- and-four-year-olds learning piano scored an average of 34 percent higher on a test of spatial reasoning than children instructed in computer use. Music, drama, and arts instruction have been linked to higher SAT scores and higher scores on tests of creative thinking, art appreciation, reading, vocabulary, and math (Rusch, 1998). In a 1995 College Board testing, students who have studied the arts for at least four years score 59 points higher on the verbal portion of the SAT and 44 points higher on math, than students with no experience or coursework in the arts (Boss).

Although "extracurricular activities" such as music and gym are often the first to be cut, educators would do well to develop an appreciation of the vital role of play in a child's healthy development. Children need many opportunities to cultivate their imaginations and engage their emotions through drama, athletics, art, music, and dance. Integrating these separate disciplines into the curriculum supports the development of literacy—written, oral, and aesthetic.

## Monitoring Children's Progress

> *Evaluation practices, particularly testing practices, operationalize the school's values. More than what educators say, more than what they write in curriculum guides, evaluation practices tell both students and teachers what counts.* (Eisner, 1991, p. 81)

As Eisner (1991) points out, evaluation practices have a profound influence not only on instruction but also on the school climate itself. In schools that support children's emergent literacy, authentic assessments that reflect the child's performance during typical activities in the classroom are the primary assessment strategy. Teachers are encouraged to be "kid watchers" (a term coined by Yetta Goodman in 1978), seeking to understand learning from the child's point of view. Vivian Paley writes about the important role of self-reflection and sensitive attention to children's perspectives:

> The act of teaching became a daily search for the child's point of view, accompanied by the sometimes unwelcome disclosure of my hidden attitudes. The search was what mattered—only later did someone tell me it was research—and it provided an open-ended script from which to observe, interpret, and integrate the living drama of the classroom (1989, p. 7).

In the last 10 years there has been a proliferation of authentic-assessment strategies that provide a comprehensive picture of children's learning and development. These strategies provide valuable information to share with parents, and they provide information to individualize and improve instruction. Following are brief summaries of authentic assessments that can help guide instructional decisions regarding literacy:

### Writing Assessment

The six writing traits used to assess children's writing in grades three and above have been adapted for children in the primary grades (Spandel, 1996). At the primary level, these traits are noticeable in artwork, storytelling, and speaking before children are able to reproduce these features in their own writing:

- **Ideas**: Look for details in children's artwork and storytelling.
- **Organization**: Think balance and harmony.
- **Voice**: Individuality! Sparkle! Love of writing, drawing, life itself.
- **Word choice**: Look for original expression, and note children's curiosity about word meanings or usage.
- **Sentence fluency**: The rhythm and flow of the language, the sound of the word pattern. Fluent writing has cadence, power, rhythm, and movement.
- **Conventions**: Notice and acknowledge beginning use of conventions, such as: writing from left to right, beginning at the top of the page, facing all the "E's" the same way, and putting spaces between the words. Later, children will attend to spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar.

## Retellings

In a retelling, children—orally or in writing—retell a selected text to convey their understanding of it, including all relevant details, responses, inferences, and associations. Retellings are both *good instruction* and *good assessment.* Retellings enrich students' language in all its forms—reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The benefits include greater oral language complexity, improved reading comprehension, increased awareness of the different ways in which texts are structured, greater articulation of connections within and between texts, and heightened use of literacy language and genre-specific conventions in students' own writing and speaking. Retellings provide the teacher with a window into students' reading strategies, background experiences relevant to the text, and understandings of particular texts (Braunger, 1995).

## Running Records of Oral Text Reading

In *Highlight My Strengths: Assessment and Evaluation of Literacy Learning*, Leanna Traill (1993) describes running records as "the most insightful, informative, and instructionally useful assessment procedure you can use for monitoring a child's progress in learning to read." Developed by Marie Clay, running records are a form of miscue analysis.
Regie Routman (1994) explains:

> The teacher observes, records, and analyzes any unexpected words the child says in the process of reading aloud a connected text. Running records are used for instructional purposes to evaluate the child's reading behaviors and set directions for teaching, to check the difficulty of a text for a child, and to monitor progress. Although it is possible to teach yourself to take a running record, the easiest and best way to learn it is to have a trained Reading Recovery (a short-term early intervention designed to reduce and prevent reading failure) teacher demonstrate for you and practice with you (p. 325).

## Individualizing Instruction

Routman (1994) recommends combining running records with retellings and using running records with good readers about three times a year, and about every six weeks with struggling readers. In addition, careful observation of children's literacy activities and frequent conferences in which teachers talk things over with children can provide information about learning styles, attitudes, strengths, and needs.

Literature logs of books read provides another important piece of information. All of these assessments can provide information that helps teachers match books with children's reading level, as evidenced by their ability to read the words in the text with 90 to 95 percent accuracy. Based on careful assessment, teachers can also provide "mini-lessons" tailored to the needs of each child. For example, if a child is consistently having trouble reading or writing particular combinations of letters, such as *br* or with endings or beginnings of words, teachers can target these sounds.

**Portfolio assessment.** Over the last few years, the use of portfolios for children of all ages has gained in popularity. Portfolios are an organized collection of children's work that provide a continuous record of a child's progress over time and typically travel with the child throughout

the primary grades. One of the strengths of portfolios is that they reflect multiple voices and perspectives: those of children, parents, and teachers. Based on the assumption that children should be active participants in their own assessment (rather than passive objects of assessment), children are encouraged to make judgments about their own work and reflect on their progress during frequent individual and group conferences. Paulson, Paulson and Meyer (1991) observe:

> Portfolios have the potential to reveal a lot about their creators. They can become a window into the students' heads, a means for both staff and students to understand the educational process at the level of the individual learner. They can be powerful educational tools for encouraging students to take charge of their own learning (p. 61).

Language arts portfolios may include writing samples, art work, self-portraits, stories, audiotapes of children's oral reading and speaking, photographs, teacher and parent reflections, summaries of progress, and children's reflective comments about their work. Because portfolios are the result of a collaboration between teachers, children, and parents, they play a critical role in helping to develop shared meaning and shared memories.

In summary, effective assessment is integrated with curriculum content and instructional strategies, providing information that is valued by teachers, parents, and children. Such an approach, in Meisels, Dorfman, and Steele's words (1995), "puts assessment back where it belongs—in the hands of teachers and children, and in the classrooms in which they work."

## Conclusion

> *Do not underestimate your power as an educator. Your power to make all of your students feel included, and perhaps, most importantly, your power to plant hope.* (Wu, 1992).

At the heart of a balanced literacy curriculum is the understanding that reading is language. Clearly, children need many enjoyable experiences with listening to, reading, and writing meaningful texts. They need demonstrations of strategies for decoding and comprehension. And they need numerous opportunities to share ideas and opinions, to contribute to joint writing of prose and poetry, and to share and extend each others' stories. But, as Cambourne (1995) points out, the key to successful literacy experiences is engagement: "It didn't matter how much immersion in text and language we provided. It didn't matter how riveting, compelling, exciting, or motivating our demonstrations were; if students didn't engage with language, no learning could occur" (p. 186).

Entering an imaginary world through reading and creating an imaginary world through writing are intellectually demanding tasks. In order to do so, children must be able to meaningfully connect new information with prior knowledge and experience, make the sustained effort required by reading and writing for meaning, and be confident in their ability to be successful. Children who have had few positive experiences with reading and writing may struggle with one or all of these necessary conditions for true engagement.

Research on resiliency has highlighted the pivotal role of teachers in the lives of young children. According to Cambourne (1995), "Learners are more likely to engage with demonstrations given by someone they like, respect, admire, trust, and would like to emulate" (p. 188). If schools are to help all children to become lifelong readers and writers, careful attention to relationships—both within the school and between the school and families and the larger community—is crucial.

In an action-research project at a Missouri school, teachers began an effort to improve children's writing with the goal of "fixing the students' writing." Through the case-study research, that goal shifted to "fixing the teaching methods," and finally to "fixing the relationships between teachers and students" (Krater, Zeni, & Cason, cited in Braunger & Lewis, 1997). Only when children feel valued and supported are they free to use and appreciate oral, written, and aesthetic language in all its richness and complexity.

At Tulalip Elementary School, the district and the tribe are working together to create a curriculum that uses Tulalip language, literature, and culture to connect children with their culture and to satisfy all state benchmarks.

## Tulalip Elementary: Meeting Washington State Benchmarks through Tulalip Language and Culture

"The Tulalip-based curriculum is the result of several years of work, and I think it really illustrates what we can accomplish when the school district and tribe work together," explains David Cort, teacher of the Tulalip-based classroom at Tulalip Elementary in Marysville. "It's the result of a partnership between the school district and the tribe. About four years ago one of our district administrators and one of our tribal administrators were talking together and saying 'we've had a bad history between us, what can we do to change things?'"

Their conversation resulted in the development of a committee with members from both the tribal administration a nd the school district. After two years of working together, the committee produced a working document and a vision that Marysville schools would include more Tulalip language and culture in their curriculum. Key to the committee's plan was that students be offered the option of being in a classroom where the curriculum is based on Tulalip language and culture, which would also meet all state benchmarks. Last year, the fourth-grade Tulalip-based classroom was started. This year, the tribe is paying for language teacher Suzanne Ueberagga to work in the elementary school full time, with co-teaching a Lushootseed bilingual kindergarten class as one of her duties.

"When we met as a committee it was clear that the research showed that Native American kids who feel positive about their culture perform better," states Cort. Research that the committee found from the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) also showed that students who learn a second language learn better, develop more flexibility in their thinking, are able to see the world from different perspectives, and possibly perform better on standardized tests. These research findings influenced Cort and tribal teacher Michele Balagot, who teaches Lushootseed language for the Cultural Resources Department of the Tulalip Tribes. They were paid by the district and tribal administration, respectively, to develop the curriculum plan over the summer.

While Cort is not Native American or from the Marysville area, he says that he developed a passion for the first language and culture of the area when he first came to the Pacific Northwest and began taking lessons in Lushootseed, the native language of the eastern Puget Sound.

### The Lushootseed Language

Lushootseed is the native language of the east side of Puget Sound. Traditionally, native people have spoken this language from Puyallup and Nisqually in the south to the Skagit River in the north. Many pressures have acted on Lushootseed to the point where it is now the native language of only a handful of elders. However, young people and some of their parents at tribal schools throughout the Puget Sound are learning this beautiful, ancient language as a second language. Many hope for a revival of Lushootseed so that it will once again be spoken as a first language by native people of the Puget Sound.

The forces which have been so destructive to Lushootseed are typical of the forces operating against Native American languages in general, and in fact against minority languages throughout the world. The United States government attempted to eradicate the language through its boarding school policies beginning in the late 19th century. Children were separated from their families and taught at government boarding schools where they were forbidden to speak their native language. Erosion of the language continued after World War II when young people returning to the reservation from military service tipped the scales in favor of English. The Tribal Council meetings at Tulalip began to be conducted in English after this point. By the 1960s when Thom Hess began to work with Tulalip elders, most young people were no longer interested in the ancestral language. Cultural pride movements contributed to a resurgence of interest in native languages, and a number of tribal language programs have developed over the past decades. But dominant-language media, such as television and the Internet, continue to erode the position of minority languages throughout the world.

Lushootseed is like the vast majority of small languages in the world which are struggling for survival. There are more than 6,000 languages in use today, but linguists estimate that over 90 percent will be lost during the next century. These languages represent beauty and wisdom acquired by humanity over the course of countless generations. Their loss is a terrible loss for human culture. Take a small step to counteract the loss of diversity in our world: begin to learn an endangered language. And if you live in the Puget Sound, there is no better language to learn than Lushootseed, the First Language of your home.

Source: David Cort, Tulalip Elementary Web site:
http://www.msvl.wednet.edu/elementary/tulalip_site/index.htm

The Tulalip-based classroom's curriculum satisfies all state benchmarks, but uses Tulalip language, literature, and culture to do so. Several lesson plans, including how each lesson is aligned with state benchmarks in reading, math, science, history, geography, music, health and physical education, are described on the school's extensive Web site (http://www.msvl.wednet.edu/elementary/tulalip_site/index.htm).

The Web site also contains illustrated stories in both Lushootseed and English, biographies of storytellers, information about Tulalip artist William Shelton and the story poles he has carved, Lushootseed words and phrases to read and hear, and information on Tulalip constellations, math concepts, calendar, and games.

The curriculum includes not only Tulalip content, such as reading Tulalip literature or counting in Lushootseed, but also includes Tulalip processes, such as traditional storytelling form or methods of Tulalip measurement. (See sidebar earlier in this chapter for Cort's description of Tulalip approaches to reading and story.)

Study focuses on students' local environment and community. For example, a unit in science will study the local saltwater ecosystem. Students learn the scientific and cultural importance of the various subjects, studying both the traditional ways and the cultural ways of today. Thus, the science unit on the saltwater ecosystem will include a study of fishermen and their families. John McCoy, Executive Director of Governmental Affairs at Tulalip Tribes, discusses the links that are possible between science and culture:

> In our culture we're called the salmon people. I would like to see this in the curriculum, in the science classes, salmon habitat recovery, from K through 12. In kindergarten, I want you to put a small salmon in the child's hand; this is a baby salmon. At the 12th-grade level, we have the seniors standing there with an 80 pound king, saying "here it is!" In order to have salmon recovery, you cover a ton of science disciplines—forest management, water quality, landslide specialist, earthquake specialist, on and on. Construction is even in salmon recovery. That's why I'm pushing salmon recovery in the classrooms and urging that it be taught every day, not just once in a while. That way you bring in the tribal culture and language.

Cort explains that last year, he and the tribal teacher did most of the research to develop the curriculum, but that this year he is teaching the students how to do the research on their culture. He articulates that the projects are exciting and motivating because they involve the local environment and culture. For example, Tulalip elder Wayne Williams informed Cort about a pole his grandfather, William Shelton, sold to the Woodland Park Zoo. The pole was removed in the 1970s, but Cort's class is using the pole as the basis for a research project. Cort hopes the project will culminate in finding and restoring Shelton's pole.

While focusing on the local environment and culture makes learning relevant for children and builds upon their existing knowledge, it also has implications for addressing racism in our communities, McCoy explains:

> The Washington State schools, when they talk about Native Americans in their history and civics classes--they need to be talking about the Indians that are in their area. I have a lot of friends that are Lakota Sioux, Blackfeet, from the Midwest or Eastern Tribes, and I love them dearly, but the Washington State school system should be teaching about Washington State Tribes because we have 29 tribes in this state. We have a rather large Indian population in Washington State. With all the misconceptions that are running around in this state, those misconceptions can only be broken down by educating. The best way to educate is to be teaching about the tribes within the state. So hopefully some of these misconceptions and attitudes that seem to pervade in this state will go away.

Lessons that do not require higher-order thinking skills, but are focused on knowledge acquisition of a Western discipline, and that lend themselves to lots of visuals or acting, are taught in "sheltered" (appropriately simplified) Lushootseed. Thus, subjects taught from a Western perspective become a language-learning opportunity as well. For example, when teaching students the digestive system, Cort teaches it from a Western perspective rather than a Tulalip perspective, but students learn the names of body parts and are able to describe digestive processes in Lushootseed.

### Benefits of the Tulalip-Based Classroom

Students will enjoy all the benefits of learning about our rich local culture, which will enhance the self-esteem and investment of native students. The program will also increase the self-esteem and sense of place of non-native students, as they develop a deep familiarity with the culture and first language of their home. In addition, students will gain the academic and cognitive advantages of learning a second language. Researchers have shown that studying a second language "can enhance problem-solving skills, creativity, and general cognitive development, and may even aid in sharpening native language skills." The Marysville School District will also benefit from the Tulalip-Based Classroom (TBC). The classroom will be a remarkable example of cooperation between a school district and a tribe, enhancing the image of both. The class will also serve as a model for other culture-based classrooms within the school district. Immersion programs in Spanish or other languages could be developed using the TBC model. The tribe will also benefit as it provides the opportunity for tribal children to learn about Tulalip language and culture in their local school.

Source: David Cort, Tulalip Elementary Web site:
http://www.msvl.wednet.edu/elementary/tulalip_site/index.htm

Cort acknowledges that there is a tension between preparing children for the WASL and a more culturally congruent curriculum, because parts of the WASL are very "Western" in their approach. For example, the repeated practice required to master the complex math and problem-solving skills included in the WASL can take so much time that there is little time left for culture-based math projects.

Cort is expanding the reach of his classroom curriculum by training students from last year, who are now fifth-graders, to be language teachers in the schools. Cort guides them in how to tell and retell a story, based on the occasion and audience. The students will then make language and storytelling presentations to the entire school.

When describing the changes he has seen in the children since the new curriculum was implemented last year, Cort is enthusiastic:

> Kids love learning about their culture. They feel pride: they see themselves as leaders. Culture motivates them to learn and to teach other kids. The younger kids value their culture, but some of them don't know very much about it so they look up to the kids in the Tulalip-based classroom.

One tribal member mentioned that she has also seen changes in behavior and learning and states, "I have noticed a couple of things. One of them is that when Cort's class comes in for an assembly, they behave better in than most of the other classes. I think that there's some more respect there, and I know the kids are engaged in what they're doing."

### Relationships With Families

Describing parents' reaction to the new curriculum, Cort states that parents are very enthusiastic, and they enjoy seeing their kids learn the language. He feels that the Tulalip-Based Classroom has helped to mend some of the problematic relationship between schools and Native American communities:

> The community wants their kids to do well in school, and it values its language and culture. We have a responsibility to give that to them, especially here at Tulalip because we are a part of this history where education has been used to take away culture and language. It's extra work but it can be done and it should be done.

Not only has the curriculum changed, but so too have Cort's interactions with parents. "I've learned the most through the guidance of tribal members who have helped me to build better relationships with parents and kids," he explains. One example of how these interactions have changed is in parent-teacher conferences:

> I used to have it in my head that I had to discuss the expectations, show them the child's portfolio, discuss their strengths and weaknesses, and I had to do it all in 20 minutes. I thought I was pretty responsive to the parents' culture, but last year my student teacher Mike Sheldon, who is a Tulalip tribal member, really told me how that type of conferencing wasn't right, and it has made me change the way I do conferences. He told me that in his opinion the relationship between the teacher and the parent was the most important, that I needed to take long periods of time to build that relationship. So we talk about their family, who they are related to, fishing. Maybe we won't get to all the other stuff, but in this parent's opinion, that's OK. He wanted a few strategies for how he could help at home. And he told me about the importance of having food, of having salmon dip and coffee for the parents. Parents feel more positively about the school because you've built that relationship.

### Tribe/School Partnerships

The emphasis on including more Tulalip culture and language in schooling has led to other school/tribe partnerships as well.

- **Fifth-grade graduation celebration.** A relationship was strengthened when the tribe invited the school to hold a fifth-grade graduation celebration in a longhouse. A tribal elder was a speaker at the celebration, which was also attended by tribal witnesses. A totem done by a tribal carver was passed from the fifth-graders to the fourth-grade class, symbolizing a passing of the leadership. Fryberg describes the event and the community's response:

David Cort's class did a presentation, they did a little play in Lushootseed and served food and sang some Lushootseed songs. It was so awesome. Everybody was just thrilled, because the language is starting, after all of these years, to come out really well.

- **Video series.** Students have worked on several professionally produced videos, through a partnership developed by Lita Sheldon, Tribal Communications Director, with the local TV station. In the videos, students tell stories and teach Lushootseed. Students worked on the graphics with the tribal language department. In addition, one video was shot in a longhouse, with the children telling the story of it. The videos are available at the local library and were broadcast on the local TV channel.
- **Bridging the technology divide.** The Tulalip Tribes have formed a partnership with Everett Community College and the University of Washington in an effort to bridge the technology divide and bring the reservation up to current technology levels. The colleges have built a four-year program of study, at the end of which tribal members will have a degree in a computer-related field.

  The graduates will fill the gap in the lack of computer professionals in the community. What's more, the tribal government has assigned the students with the task of creating a plan for meeting and implementing the technology needs of the reservation. The wide-ranging plan will cover hardware and software needs as well as an educational plan laying out the various disciplines needed and ensuring the proper courses are available for tribal members.

  John McCoy reports that students are very excited about the program. Sixteen students started the program last year, 12 of whom are tribal members, and all of whom are still in the program. The Marysville School District has heard of the plan and has approached the tribe about integrating their high school students into the program, of which efforts are underway.
- **Lecture series.** Last winter the Marysville School District worked with the tribe to organize an evening lecture series for the community about the history and culture of the Tulalip Tribes. The tribal speakers presented to about 100 people at each of the five lectures. Attendees included people from the Marysville Police Department, Snohomish County Police Department, leaders and elders from the community, and local non-native historians. The lectures were so popular that people were sad to see it end and are looking forward to another series this winter.

A tribal member explained how the lecture series filled a void left by a lack of written historical information:

> I think that there are a lot of people in our community that want to know more, but it's hard to find information. I mean, what you read in the newspapers isn't always true about people. We don't have a lot of information about our tribe in any kind of textbooks or anything like that. When you come to these lecture series you get to hear from the people about what their history was and what they're doing now and the community really liked that.

## Bringing Students' Cultures Into School

Indian languages and culture have been coming back in recent years from near-extinction, as noted by several members from tribes throughout Washington. Years of schooling where Native American languages and cultural practices were strictly forbidden helped to largely assimilate most Indian peoples against their will. Dianna Purser from the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe describes Native American communities' intention to maintain and revive their culture:

> We want to maintain our culture. That is the bottom line. They've been trying to assimilate native people for 200 years, and we have pretty much been assimilated in, I would say, 90 percent of our living styles. But there is a line drawn within all of our hearts that says we do want to maintain our culture and also restore some of the things that were totally stripped away from our grandparents. We are still in a cultural shock. We are still coming out of a cultural shock as a whole in all of Native American culture from the genocide effect that was thrust upon us in the 1850s. We are still feeling those reflections of that pain. If we can get the school district or non-natives to develop respect; to realize that, no, we are not going to be fully assimilated. To some extent, yes, but we do want to maintain our culture, we do want our language back, we want to have the same equal opportunities as everyone else, and we do not want to be exploited anymore. To have inclusion of our language in the school curriculum is one of the goals of Building Bridges. Respect for our culture may start from the very thing that was taken—language. Students will have S'Klallam language as a credited subject.

A Tulalip tribal member echoed the comments of many Native Americans in expressing her view that the educational system should help Native American children to live and succeed in both the native and non-native worlds. She also states that recognition and accurate and sensitive teaching of Native languages and cultures by schools can be one of the first steps in "healing" wounds from the oppression, assimilation, and misunderstanding that Native American communities have faced:

> In order for our tribes and our people to continue to protect our sovereignty, our tribal rights, and our tribal lands, I think we need to have an education to compete in this world. And at the same time, I think it's crucial that the educational system is working with the tribes and the community to be teaching the culture and the language. There's a fear that it was in the educational system that those things were lost. So it's through the educational system that we need to bring those things back into our community and start healing our community that way.

Bringing the culture of students into the classroom requires an understanding of those cultures that can best be attained through strong relationships between the school and the community. McCoy discusses the role of the school in this process:

> Schools are the heart of any community. Everything gravitates toward a school. It depends on the attitudes of the people that are hired within that school on how successful it will be within the community, because people just naturally gravitate toward the educational system. It's the people who work in the school, and whether they're receptive to bringing the community in or holding them off.

Cort describes how he has built relationships with the Tulalip community:

> You earn parents' respect when you are repeatedly seen by them in the community, when you see them at community events. I attend the Indian arts festival, the powwows, the Treaty Days. Being willing to learn from the community that you're serving means a lot. I have found that this community is very willing to share.

# Chapter VI

## Family/School/Community Partnerships: An Interest That Comes From The Heart

> *Kids need adults who bear witness to the details of their lives and count them as something. They require the watchful eyes and the community standards that provide stability. They need appreciation for who they are.* (Patricia Hersch, cited in Riley, 2000)

"*All* children will learn to high standards" is a primary goal of our current school reform movement. But, as achievement gaps among the nation's racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups continue to be resistant to change, a central question becomes, "How can we ensure that *each* child has the support they need for healthy development and optimal learning?" The Unity Project places school/family/community partnerships at the center of the answer that question. "Parents who traditionally have not been involved need to get their voices heard so things can change at all levels," says Helen Malagon, continuing:

> Parents are the key; when they have an understanding of the system that their students need to be schooled in, then they can provide us with some guidance and resources, and can hold all of us, including themselves and their communities, accountable for what we need to do.

The principals, families, and school staff at the Unity Project schools reported a number of benefits that have come from their concerted focus on family and community partnerships. In many cases, the emphasis has resulted in:

- New links with community preschools and faith-based organizations
- Broadened awareness of the need to address children's mental and physical health issues
- "Opened doors" for families to participate in their children's education
- Increased awareness of the benefits of culturally responsive teaching

What are the aspirations of families, school staffs, and community members for their children's education? What are the characteristics of effective partnerships? What gets in the way? These are some of the questions we asked in our interviews.

### Aspirations for Children

Many of the people we interviewed spoke with emotion about the importance of education. "It's the greatest thing a child can have. And as a parent, you should support them in every possible way," said one parent. For most, education was viewed, not only as a means to a good job, but as

a way for children to use their imaginations, to make discoveries, and reach their individual potential, as friends, and family and community members. Growing up and "giving back to the community," becoming an example to others, and helping children to accomplish their dreams were highly valued goals. "We want our children to be intellectually prepared so that the community prospers," was a frequently expressed sentiment. In turn, communities were seen as having a pivotal role in supporting schools and children, through volunteering, providing services, and supporting funding for schools. A father of two children voiced his opinion:

> If we better our students in our community, that means that we're going have a better community, a stronger community. So...where does that start? It starts with *our* kids, because they're going be the leaders for tomorrow. So the way we educate our kids *now*, will effect—for the best, or for the worst—the future.

.Both parents and school staff saw education as a way to overcome barriers of poverty, minority status, and learning English as a second language. Carmelita Lopez, a home visitor at Rowena Chess Elementary School in Pasco, stressed their hope that children will become role models in the community:

> One day in our community, I want my children to give back to the community. Be proud of where they grew up, the school, where they graduated-be an example to others. Those are my aspirations, that they can positively influence others, so that others can be a success. And for myself, a big part is being an example-that you can achieve it and show success is attainable-even if it's really hard, you can still make it.

By bringing back languages and cultures once taken away by our school system, many Native Americans saw education as a way to begin healing the community. According to fourth-grade Tulalip elementary teacher David Cort, "The community wants their kids to do well in school. The community values their language and culture. We have a responsibility to give that to them." Becoming culturally competent by understanding more about the cultures represented in their communities and learning about shared history, were considered important strategies to combat ignorance and racism. For some, education played an important role in giving disenfranchised people a voice. A father of two elementary school children expressed this view:

> It's sad to say, but sometimes, even though we're in the year 2000, there are still racist attitudes, and some people don't want things to change. The ones that are on top want to stay on top, and they want to keep the ones that are on the bottom, on the bottom. And that gets our kids mad. I think one of the solutions is education. If we are educated, to where we understand our rights, as parents, as minorities, then I feel we can accomplish a lot more. Between the knowledge, and education, and patience, we will get us through—get to our goals.

### The Filipino Youth Empowerment Project, Seattle, WA

A partnership of Seattle Public Schools, the Filipino Community of Seattle (an ethnic organization), the City of Seattle, community colleges, universities, and other organizations, the Filipino Youth Empowerment Project provides tutoring and peer mentoring for students, and information for immigrant parents about the issues their children experience as they attempt to fit into American schools and society. The Project grew out of a search by community members for ways to shelter young Filipinos from violence and to keep them in school. The project also operates Filipino-American student clubs in 23 high schools and leadership training forums for young people at the Filipino Community Center. Schools refer students who are having academic or behavioral problems to the Project. Project staff report back to the schools on students' progress in the tutoring and mentoring program. Youth advocates who are graduates from the Project help high school students understand their cultural heritage, address family problems and plan for the future. While continuing to focus on Filipino students, the Project is open to students of any ethnicity. It serves 30-35 students each year and of the first cohort to graduate from high school in 1998, 75% went on to college.

## Between Failure and Success: Building Effective Partnerships

The 28 demonstration schools credited their involvement with the Unity Project with new and more effective outreach efforts to include families who traditionally have been reluctant to participate in school activities. A principal in a school with a large percentage of Native American children said:

> The great thing about the Unity Project is the flexibility; they let us take the lead and decide what our school needs. One of the best activities was getting away from school to do some planning on how to work more effectively with families. We decided that we were not going to wait for the community to come to us; we are gong to go to the community. Some of our staff went to the Indian Agency and held some parent meetings there. The parents voiced their concerns and gave suggestions. It was not a gripe session; it empowered the parents and gave them a voice.

Research shows that the most powerful form of parental involvement occurs when parents are actively engaged with their children at home in ways that enhance learning. In a review of the literature on parent involvement in education, Thorkildsen and Stein (1998) reported that a number of activities—parents encouraging reading and homework, caring what happens in class, keeping track of school progress, and finding children a place to study—were correlated with children's school performance.

For many of the parents we talked with, learning about the importance of their role as their children's first teacher was an empowering experience. Through school activity nights, volunteering at school, and on home visits many parents who thought that their only responsibility was "just to get them up, get them dressed, and send them off to school," learned how to teach colors and counting to preschoolers while washing dishes and other household chores. They learned how important it was to have their children read to them, even if they themselves couldn't read English, or, indeed, any language. A teaching assistant and mother of two young children said:

> The Unity Project has opened up eyes to see what I need to do to participate in my children's life. I have been involved a lot but not as much as I should have been. I wish that everybody could have been there and see how important family involvement is. I think they feel that school is important but often they don't feel they know how to help their child. The teachers focused on reading. When they talk about the WASL testing. I keep hearing the teachers say they don't have the help they need from parents; I keep hearing that over and over. To hear that from kindergarten teachers—that really make me stop and think—that we need to be involved no matter where they are in school.

A mother of four children, ages five to 15, credits volunteering at her children's school with 'waking her up" to the critical role she plays in her children's education:

> I think that one of the main barriers for children is for parents to say, "No, well, I'm going to send my child to school," and believe, you know, that the school has all of the responsibility. I'm going to be very honest with myself here. I never in my life thought I had a role to play in my children's education. My children would arrive home, and I would say, "You're the one who went to school. You go to school. You have to do your homework."
>
> But when I went into that school I realized that, no, I am the one responsible. I am the one responsible for helping my child at home. It was wonderful to have the opportunity, you know, to be someone in life, to be able to help my children. Since I had the experience of going into the school, as a volunteer, I began to strengthen myself, encourage myself, and say, "I have to help my children."
>
> And also, by doing all of that—talking about their day, reading aloud, doing homework together—it's really not only saying it, but also demonstrating, demonstrating that education is important, that your child is important, to give your time. Sometimes I get home tired, but I want to make them understand that I'm interested in what they're doing, and even though there are times when they say, "Oh, Mom, but you're busy," I tell them, "No, that doesn't matter. I'm listening to you. You read me the story." For me that is, very, very important.

In our interviews, we asked, "What makes for a strong partnership between families and schools?" Many of the answers, not surprisingly, highlighted the importance of caring and support, positive expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation—the same characteristics that have been found to foster resiliency for children. Because the focus of the Unity Project is on including the voices of people not usually included in the conversation about schooling, we will focus here on the perspectives of families—their stories, experiences, and opinions.

## Working Together to Support Children

Everyone we talked with stressed the importance of unity between parents and teachers in support or children, of working together, "like a community." Teachers' and families' encouragement, support, guidance, and, above all, interest were seen as crucial to children's success in school. "Teachers have a very special place in a child's life. The parents are number one; teachers are number two," said one father. Because of the importance of both of these significant adults for children's success, parents believed that establishing a positive and supportive relationship between parents and teachers was critical. "Parents feel more positively about the school because you've built that relationship," points out Tulalip Elementary fourth-grade teacher, David Cort.

Parents placed a high value on schools with a home-like atmosphere, teachers and all school staff who make families and children feel welcome "from the time that they first step onto the school grounds," and being treated with interest and respect. One father put it succinctly: "They [school staff] should have a nice manner. Because if they treat you any other way, well, you don't even want to come close." The parents of three young children expressed their appreciation for the welcoming attitude of their school:

> For the students, so far I have seen a very welcoming environment, on the part of our principals. When children are new in school, there is a very warm welcome for them. There is an introduction, even before the students enter the school, the new students are introduced to the teachers. And, I think that that is a very positive aspect. Also, I see the involvement of our principals in every activity that we do. They always know about the needs of each classroom, and they are there during the assemblies, participating too, taking a part in it. And, just by seeing the faces of each of us who are participating in the school, we can show the welcoming environment that we have in the school.

Parents stressed the importance of shared responsibility (families and schools) for children's learning. Taking time to get to know and understand each other were seen as important aspects of this mutual responsibility. A mother of an elementary school student observed:

### Getting to Know the Community, the Parents, and the Children

Sometimes I tell my graduate students to imagine that they have just gotten word that they have to leave tomorrow to go teach in Etritrea, which they've never heard of. I ask them, What are you going to have to do in order to teach when you get there? And they go through a long list of things. The culture, the relationships between parents and children. They need to know the music, the literature, the stories and how people feel about them coming there, how people feel about Americans in general. Then I ask them, How would you find out? And they say they would live in the community. They would get an informant, a friend, somebody who could help them learn about it. They would go to the religious places, the shopping places, where people congregate.

And I ask, how much of this information do you know about the children you teach? I try to get folks to understand how knowing the community and knowing the parents and the children is connected to teaching. They know that, but yet they don't seem to carry it over into their world. I think we all really know somewhere deep inside that in order to teach people, we have to know who they are and how they feel about us.

Source: Lisa Delpit, forum participant, School Colors: The Racial Politics of Public Education. *The Nation,* 270(22), 2000.

> I think if teachers would get more involved with the parents, and if parents get more involved with school, then we can, we can understand each other better, because if I keep my opinions back, it's hard for teachers to understand, or to try to understand each kid. I know they should know each kid individually, but I think if we get more involved, both teachers and parents, and we communicate more, it is easier. I think parents can ask, "What are the needs for my student, to do better at school? What can I do to help, or what can you do to help him?" Sometimes parents' lack of education, and lack of communication gets in the way of getting more involved. We need to take our time to understand them, and them to understand us.

Parents who spoke a language other than English were appreciative of having interpreters at the school; having a trusting relationship with the interpreter was considered critical. Being able to talk directly with teachers and other school staff was considered optimal. A father shared his thoughts on the use of interpreters:

> Things can get lost when they are interpreting what you say. Sometimes I think they say only what is good for them. And then they see you, they judge you, maybe. And sometimes they mix it up, too. They often speak the Spanish and the English, and you're there like a . . .dummy. Like you don't know what's been turned around. If the principal or teacher speaks Spanish, you speak directly with the person in charge, and you don't need to be left with doubts as to whether or not they said what they should have.

Of course, teachers may not always speak the home languages of all students. Home visitor Lopez suggests that translators do their best to relate, not only the parents words, but also the feelings behind the words:

> That's the most important part-anybody that is interpreting needs to know that it's not just word for word, but you need to express what's coming from the parents' heart. Recently, I was in a conference with a family about their son, who had been referred to special education. They were not seeing this as a resource. They were hearing that their son was retarded, and they were devastated. As Dad was speaking, it was from the heart, and was feeling the frustration, the devastation of his son not learning, not being a normal child. I glanced over at the mom, and tears were streaming down her face. So I explained to both of them that I was going to do my best to interpret, not just the words, but also the emotions. When the parents left, they knew and, more importantly, felt understood-what their feelings were. The teacher understood and others in the conference understood where the parents were coming from.

Even without language barriers, cultural differences in communication styles can create misunderstandings that both teachers and parents find hard to overcome. For example, in some Latino and Asian cultures, parents' and children's respect for authority may inhibit them from voicing their views. A Mexican American mother told why, despite her concern for her child, she didn't feel comfortable expressing her opinion to her child's teacher:

As he never offered my opinion or anything, I just stayed quiet. I mean, I wasn't going to say, "Oh, teacher, look at this." How am I going to give my opinion if no one is asking? Sometimes, it's like they might get upset, they might be insulted, if I were being honest in what I wanted to say. In the past I have felt like I made a mistake. And it seems like it would be better to remain quiet. It's just that he's the teacher. It's just for respect, and it's easier.

### Washington State Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement Project

The Washington State Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement (TQE) project is a collaborative partnership among school districts, community colleges, four-year institutions, and community organizations located in Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma and Yakima. The goal is to improve the quality of teacher preparation in the state of Washington through:

- Creating a system of state goals and learning requirements for teacher certification
- Aligning candidates' subject content preparation to state K-12 learning goals
- Articulating teacher preparation programs from high school through higher education
- Creating procedures to demonstrate that candidate teaching leads to K-12 achievement
- Developing introductory education classes to present by distance learning in remote areas
- Recruiting teachers from local populations
- Induction of teachers into the community as well as the school to facilitate retention

The work of The Title II TQE project and the efforts of the Unity Project are complementary in a number of ways. First, the educational goals of the Title II project, such as defining teacher training, aligning programs, and recruiting teachers from local populations, need to be implemented in a real-world context, (i.e. Unity Project classrooms, students, and schools). Second, to evaluate results, Unity Project schools can provide baseline information on the status of their diverse populations.

The partnership is coordinated by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and supported by the U.S. Department of Education and includes: local school districts (Spokane, Yakima, Seattle, Tacoma); Community Colleges (Spokane Falls, Yakima Valley, Seattle Central, Tacoma); four-year institutions (Eastern Washington University, Heritage College, University of Washington, University of Washington at Tacoma, Washington State University, Western Washington University, The Evergreen State College); community-based organizations (African American, Asian Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American); business and industry; faith communities; neighborhood associations; civic clubs; parent teacher associations; welfare groups; and others.

## Opportunities for Positive Engagement

Although all of those interviewed believed that keeping communication open was the responsibility of both families and schools, some expressed the belief that it was particularly important for school staff to make efforts to eliminate barriers to effective communication. Lopez spoke of the deep respect that the parents in her predominantly Mexican American community have for teachers and their role as educators—a respect that can sometimes lead to reticence in discussing any problems they may be encountering:

> For many of our families who are not from educated backgrounds, the teacher's opinion is very powerful. In a sense, that's the only word, that's the only power that there is. So between failure and success is the interest that the teacher takes, the interest that the school takes. That's what's going to do it and that's what's going to make a difference. It's an interest that has to come from the heart.

Grandparents who were raising two young children echoed this view:

> Above all, communication between teachers and families often isn't there. Sometimes there is a kind of embarrassment on the part of the parents, in communicating with the teachers, maybe because they think that they are not professionals. Because I'm from a different place, and I know that, to face another person, who speaks a different language, who is professionally trained here, well, sometimes they are a little bit scared, you know? Maybe that's why. But I would suggest that there should be a little bit more...more...trust, more communication. I mean, the teacher should be more flexible, should be more *open*, for the parents.

Washington's schools, like schools across the country, are implementing a number of strategies, both formal and informal, to enhance family/school communication, without putting additional demands on already overburdened families. Frequent newsletters and positive phone calls, surveys, interactive journals, parenting education classes, home visits, family resource centers, and referrals to community resources help parents feel supported, informed, and included. Non-threatening and enjoyable activities—picnics, potlucks, work parties, multicultural celebrations, authors' parties, field days, family fun nights, and literacy fairs lure even the most reluctant parents to school. A recently arrived mother from Central America spoke with pride about her children's school, which provides many opportunities for learning in an enriched environment:

> The first point would be the food that they give our children at school, which helps them a lot, you know? Another thing would be the environment of the classroom where they go to develop themselves on an educational level. It's very good because the children don't see it as a room only for study, but as a room, as part of their house. And also the outings that that they give them, that helps me a lot, because they learn a lot. They don't just have fun; they also have responsibility, but it is fun too. At the same time it is good for them, because when they go on a trip to museums and libraries, they learn a lot.
>
> When they do field trips, I like to go with them. I like to know about the places where my son goes, the activities that they do. So when I go to the school, normally I help the teacher do the activities, or she tells me, "You have that group of children over there. These are yours, those are mine." And I love it. For a moment you feel...you feel important, because you are, you are knowing about what your child does. There are times when the children also feel a little embarrassed, like they're a little bit quieter, you know, but I feel very proud when I go to the school and see everything that my child does. For me it's something very, very important.

Of course, not all parents feel comfortable in a volunteer role, nor, with busy work schedules, is there always time and energy for volunteering. One mother explained that she never attended school events because she felt uncomfortable and shy in large groups, while in one-on-one conversations with her child's teacher, she felt "like a family." All of those interviewed stressed the importance of communication that includes multiple opportunities for parents to engage positively with school staff. In her role as home visitor, Lopez understands the need for positive interactions and the hazards of negative communication:

> One of the things we need to stress is the need for home phone and work phone numbers. But I think that we need to make sure our parents understand that we don't want their home phone number or work number just to complain, just to say that their child is misbehaving. I think that a lot of times when I'm expected as a home visitor to make a call to a parent, it's because it's already at that point that, to the teacher, the student is misbehaving-he's out of control. Parents already have a common misconception that we call them only for negative news. That's where a lot lies in failure and success between parents and school in regards to communication. Are we just calling and having contact with these parents on a negative basis? And if we are, are we educating our parents that the only contact they'll have is when something's wrong? Would you give your home and work number to receive negative news about your child?

Parents spoke with pleasure about phone calls and notes home about positive things their children had done. Hearing that their child had been helpful, that she got along well with classmates, that she had mastered the alphabet were remembered with pride. A mother of two children had had very different experiences with their schools. She expressed her appreciation that her youngest son's school often got in touch with her with good news:

> As a parent, you recognize that children are children, and they sometimes do things, you know, because they didn't think or for whatever reason, we need to hear that, but we also like to hear good things, positive things. To hear that your child did something good, that he helps, or whatever, right? There is a pride, as a parent, to hear all that.
>
> In my youngest child's school, the teacher always calls me, she sends me little notes, "Your child did this very well," or "He does very well," and I feel very, very proud because of what the teacher does, that she's always communicating with me, she's telling me good things. And that lets me know—I don't know, it's like she's interested, and she is interested, not only for herself. And it feels a lot more satisfactory for me to not only see my child's grades, but that she lets me know, be it by phone or message, or personally, how well my child is doing.

### Newsletters

Newsletters (written in the first languages of families in the school community) can help families feel informed and included by describing class activities, providing the words to recently learned songs, sharing recipes, and offering examples of children's work and suggestions for learning activities in the home. The Central Kitsap School District offers these suggestions for reading aloud with children:

Reading aloud to children helps them to increase their vocabularies, improve their comprehension, and develop their written and spoken language skills:

**(continued)**

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- Be consistent with a time and place to read daily. Bedtime is often a favorite time.
- Choose a book appropriate to your child's intellectual, emotional, and social level.
- Stop and discuss what your own thoughts are as you read and encourage your child to share opinions about characters and events.
- Maintain your enthusiasm and that of your child by selecting books you both find interesting. If neither of you is enjoying the book, discuss why, and choose a more appropriate book.
- Ask you child to make predictions about what will happen next. Read further, and through discussion, compare predictions with what really happened.
- Discuss events that really could happen and those that are purer fantasy as found in animals talking and science fiction adventures.
- Take turns with your child. Take the part of listener while your child reads. The art of listening is an acquired one. It must be modeled, taught, and cultivated.
- Model your own reading habits. Let your child see you reading books, magazines, and newspapers.
- Talk about something you've read that you found interesting.

### Catching Problems Early

Families valued the opportunity to discuss solutions to any problems that their children might be having—"to catch a problem in time, before it got out of hand":

> For me it would be a great solution that if there were a problem, that they should deal with it first with the parent, in a good manner...or try to help the parent, especially with the children, who are the most important, right? I think that these are some of the good solutions, the communication between the parents and children, and between parents and teachers, among the three, right? Talk with them before arriving at a problem, and not that there's a problem at school and the parent only has the complaint again and again, and, and they don't arrive at any solution. When I speak with a teacher, if it's already to argue about a problem, like we're fighting, then that isn't a solution.

Several parents spoke with frustration and even despair about experiences with their children's school that created almost insurmountable barriers to positive relationships. A mother of three young children recounted a recent experience with the school where she felt that the teacher had given up on her son:

> When Stevie was in the fourth grade, I went to the open house. I stood there, you know, at the door, with a big smile, and waiting for my turn. But the teacher kept on talking with these other parents. And she kept on and on and on, and then, finally it was my turn, and she just turned to me, and she said, "Oh, you're Stevie's mom. What can I tell you about Stevie? Well, he's not doing that good." And that was it. I mean, I, as a parent, a mother, I got discouraged, and I came straight home. If she would have said, "Okay, he's not doing well, but let's sit down and figure it out What can we do to help, to better the situation?" then it would have been different.
>
> But at that instant, I categorized the teacher—right away, me, myself, an adult. I thought, well, she doesn't care for my child. See, and she's only courteous with me, because she's too busy with the other children that are more, you know...doing better.

> So there's a lack of interest in the children that are not doing so well. And that, that turns into a barrier between the child and the teacher, and between the mother and the teacher.

Such barriers were seen as particularly hard on children who are the most vulnerable, due to minority status, poverty, and lack of parental education. Attention to children's psychological problems—"sitting down and listening to children's problems,"—were frequently mentioned as critical to keep children from "falling through the cracks." A teaching assistant noted:

> Some kids don't have the luxury of having their parents go to the school for them at all. They don't have the luxury of the parent even making a phone call for them. So I think it's important that the school faculties realize that they have to do whatever they can to make that child successful. And even if it means taking five or ten or fifteen extra minutes out of their time to do it—to talk with a student one-on-one, to use the skills that they have learned in school on how to effectively interview children. They need to do this to try to find out what the children really need.

A number of parents spoke with emotion about children who got discouraged and withdrew completely after feeling disrespected at school:

> One of the principle reasons for a child's school failure is the abuse...the abuse of power by some teachers. Teachers who make the students feel bad about themselves. And because of this, the students feel as if they failed, and they don't have any spirit to keep going. Because sometimes because of that same treatment, you know, they don't feel, support. And they don't feel enough trust to be able to ask them for help when they are in some subject that they're doing badly in. Maybe it's only one teacher out of ten, but it can cause a failure of this student.

Lack of trust between teachers and parents and between teachers and students was considered one of the main barriers to student achievement. "First they have to trust and lose their fear of failure," Whittier teacher Chase-Spilman notes. One mother explained how a teacher's respect for a child leads to benefits for all concerned.

> Seeing that they have sufficient confidence in a teacher, they will go them, when they have some problem about something that they didn't understand, or something that they're not figuring out well. The child needs to feel confident in telling to teacher, "I don't know this. I feel frustrated. I don't know what to do. Please help me." And, that same good treatment that teachers give the students helps the teachers get good respect from the students.

A mother of two school-aged children expressed the view that solutions to problems come when all three—families, students, and schools are included in the discussion:

> I think that some of the solutions, for me, are that there be a lot of communication between the parents and the teacher. Especially regarding plans, often we as parents have ideas also, right? The teachers are teachers, they have their degrees, their studies, and education. But sometimes we as parents think of things that perhaps they really don't.

And, if there is a problem, maybe the solution isn't so much in the teacher, but rather that they should speak to the parents. Between the two, they can come to an agreement or discuss it and say, "What would be the best for your child and what would be the best for me as a mother, you know?" I think that these are some of the good solutions, the communication between the parents and children, between parents and teachers, between teachers and children, among the three.

### Tacoma, Washington's Family Involvement Center

*Everything we do here is about children and families.*

The Family Involvement Center in Tacoma, Washington serves all families and the community in the Tacoma Public Schools district. They offer support for all avenues of parent and community involvement in children's education including workshops, computer lab, seminars, and a lending library. Services are provided at no cost, including childcare for children birth through age 12 while parents are attending activities at the Center. An all-inclusive definition of family drives the philosophy behind the Family Involvement Center's efforts. The concept of parents as important and integral school team members has always been a part of the foundation of the district, and of the superintendent and school board, whose vision six years ago produced the Center. The concept is such a part of the educational system that it has always been 100% funded by basic education funding.

"I see our role as helping people understand what we do in school, why we do it, how we do it, and how they can help. We look at ways of helping to inform them about the system so that they can get through it in a productive way for children," states Bonnie Pinckney, Director of the Family Involvement Center, and a supporter of involvement as a process. It is a process that happens at the building level, includes the discussion and input of teachers, students and parents and incorporates the exploration of meaningful involvement. "I think we spend too much time number counting," states Pinckney, who advocates for a parent volunteer coordinator position in every school. Such a position would be a base support as integral to the school setting as a nurse, psychologist, secretary, custodian, teacher – and in place across all grades as parent involvement changes.

The Center helps each individual school define family involvement and identify the steps necessary to make it a reality. It promotes concrete discussions about the children, the building, and the needs. "You have to have the support systems there, you have to inform people and share real expectations. People will rise to the occasion; parents want to be involved." New schools are being built for more "community-friendly" activities with stand-alone community access meeting spaces. Some older schools are opening gyms and other spaces to community organizations like the Urban League and Boys and Girls clubs.

The Center also serves to train volunteer involvement coordinators in the process of meaningful involvement. This means volunteer job descriptions, clear expectations of what the school wants, and real opportunities for input and choices. "What we try to do here at the Center is provide a big picture of the system, the 'what', 'why', and 'how' of it and give people skills in defining it," states Pinckney. "We have a lot of disenfranchised parents that come through here that we have to nurture back to health in supporting the schools."

Anyone who cares for or is concerned for students in the Tacoma School District is a welcomed addition to the more than 7,000 parents, business, college, community, high school and senior citizen volunteers that are registered in the District's volunteer programs to support children's education. People of all ages and backgrounds tutor in reading, math, science, history, and other subjects. The parent workshops, open to all families with children enrolled in Tacoma Public Schools, not just targeted populations, are designed to cover an array of needs, including goal-setting with their children, learning about curriculum content, supporting fathers and grandparents, and accessing community resources. Each workshop pays parents "fun bucks" that can be used to purchase new merchandise in a parent store.

## School-based Child and Family Support Programs: Fostering Resiliency and Emotional Intelligence

Many parents we talked with expressed their appreciation of how important and how difficult a teacher's job is:

> The teacher has so many children at school. I mean, first of all, I don't know how they do it, being a teacher. How they have the patience and the capability that they have, that person—be it a man or a woman—to catch *all* of the problems of each individual child. I admire them a lot in that sense.

How do already overburdened teachers find the time and energy to address the psychological needs of each child, to find solutions to every problem, to form effective partnerships with families, and ensure the success of all children? The basic premise of the Unity Project is that the complex needs of children and families can only be addressed through family/school/community partnerships. By utilizing funds from RTL, Title I, Title VII, Title IX, and other funding sources, more and more of Washington's schools are creating school-based child and family support programs to address the social and emotional needs of children, and to build strong linkages between home, school, and the community. While effective programs evolve to meet the unique needs of a particular school community, they have one central guiding principle: children and their school success are at the center.

Programs are frequently directed by a working team that includes teachers, principals, school psychologists, social workers, and/or counselors. Partnerships with the juvenile justice system, Head Start programs and preschools, faith-based organizations, and medical and mental-health agencies increase the support network for children and families. At the center of these partnerships is often a position that has a long history in Head Start programs, but is still relatively rare, even in Washington's schools. Variously described as a family advocate, child and family mentor, parent liaison, home visitor, family service worker, and child-development specialist, this liaison between home and school plays an important role in breaking down barriers that inhibit home/school partnerships.

Services are both child and family-focused. Key to their success is providing opportunities for children and families to discuss feelings and concerns in a supportive environment, an environment that focuses on problem solving, rather than assigning guilt or deciding who is wrong. In the context of a supportive relationship, children are given opportunities to learn conflict-resolution strategies, anger management, communication, problem solving, and friendship skills.

Family service workers (often with guidance from licensed counselors or social workers) frequently work directly with children, as well as coaching teachers and all staff members in the use of strategies to promote children's social skills and emotional development. When schools and families provide opportunities for children to systematically think through emotions, to reflect on their behavior, and to understand how others think and feel, bullying, teasing, and other hurtful behaviors are much less likely to become an accepted part of school culture (Kohn, 1996; Meier, 1995).

Services to families address a range of issues. Families may be given opportunities to learn about children's development and to engage in enjoyable learning activities at home, assistance in developing positive behavior plans for their children, and help in accessing health, educational, and social services, as well as other resources. According to Lopez, trusting relationships can be built by helping families to access needed resources:

> If families have no food or clothing, then I need to know. It is my job to serve these families. I'll make calls or write a referral letter, and direct them to the appropriate agency. I will give them all the information they need, so when they go to the agency, the agency will be expecting them.

> When you do something like this-when they're in a real tight spot-and you help them to get their basic needs met, then next time, whatever their concern is, they'll come back to you. If there are any problems with behavior or any concerns about their child, then already a foundation has been established with parents and students. The door of trust and respect has already been opened and the parent is willing to cooperate with the school. They'll be open-minded toward the school.

### Families as Resources

An equally important premise of the Unity Project is that parents are valuable resources with knowledge and experience that often goes unrecognized and untapped by our schools. "The work of the Unity Project is the concept of the whole village—the shared knowledge we are missing in not bringing in a lot of people," reminds Helen Malagon. "We need to appreciate the resource that they truly are." Including parent and community voices at all levels of decision making—at the district and state level, in their communities—is a primary goal of the Unity project. Proving multiple avenues for parents and community members to share talents, interests, concerns, and expertise leads to a sense of shared responsibility for all children. John McCoy, Executive Director of Governmental Affairs at Tulalip Tribes, places schools at the center of the community:

> Schools are the heart of any community. Everything gravitates toward a school. It depends on the attitudes of the people that are hired within that school on how successful it will be within the community, because people just naturally gravitate toward the educational system. It's the people who work in the school, and whether they're receptive to bringing the community in or holding them off.

School-based child and family support programs may include a number of components and characteristics. It is important to keep in mind that, as Malagon points out, "Education is not just a matter of a few strategies." Over and over, in our interviews, parents told us that everything about schooling—the relationships, the communication, the interest—all must be "from the heart".

## Characteristics of Effective Programs

- *Family service workers* (discussed above) play an important role in bridging home and school and in breaking down barriers that inhibit home/school partnerships. They often provide parenting education and help families access needed health and social services. Families are encouraged to share interests, expertise, opinions, and concerns. Though typically not certified counselors, advocates work closely with counselors and/or social workers, serving as a special friend and mentor to children identified as needing extra support. They also provide individual consultation and assistance to teachers regarding the students and families they work with, as well as coaching teachers in the use of strategies to promote children's social and academic skills.

  Ongoing training, support, and communication with the entire school faculty are crucial. When there are a number of family advocates in a district, it is helpful to form a support network that meets on a regular basis. The effectiveness of family advocates is greatly enhanced when they are fully integrated into their school communities.

- *Home visiting programs*—sometimes with parents visiting other parents who become links between parents and schools—have been effective in including families in the school community. Careful attention to cultural issues and the comfort level of families is crucial to their success. Major elements include:

  - Paid parent support workers, selected on the basis of previous experience in counseling or training in community settings
  - Systematic training, supervision, and support
  - Services which provide information about school programs
  - Services demonstrating positive ways to work with children
  - Services which offer referrals to health and social service agencies
  - Meetings between teachers and home visitors to exchange information and ideas (Heleen, 1992)

  Of course, it is important to respect parents' perspectives on home visits. For a variety of reasons not all parents are comfortable with visits. A social worker explained how important it is to understand the family's point of view:

  Some parents may feel embarrassed because they feel their homes don't have the same amenities as middle-class home do. They may have only one chair; they may live with several other families. So we have to leave it as an option for them to decide whether they would prefer a home visit or for them to come to the school or other meeting place where they'll feel comfortable.

- *Family resource centers* provide an inviting place where parents can chat with other parents and teachers, watch informational videos, and learn about school activities. In addition, they often provide resources and information about health and social service agencies, adult educational opportunities, child development, school policies and procedures, and how to support their child's education. Most important, family resource centers are a highly effective way to communicate to parents that they are welcome at school. A well-designed center will:

- Provides parents with an accessible and friendly room or space for their own use at the school (or district)
- Facilitates communication between families and the school
- Provides opportunities for parents to get to know each other and network
- Promote greater multicultural understanding among the school's families and faculty
- Offers educational and socializing opportunities, and
- Serve as a hub for promoting parent education by linking with community resources and carrying out a wide range of home/school partnership activities that enhance students' learning
- Help develop leadership and advocacy skills and opportunities for parents to participate in the school community
- Coordinate parent and community volunteer services that are available to teachers and the school (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1996).

### PELT: Parent Effectiveness Leadership Training

PELT is designed to provide parents with the leadership skills to be able to access the educational system where their children attend school. Developed by Sunnyside School District's Parent Involvement Training/Coordinator Sara Vega-Evans, the program is intended to "invite parents and families who have traditionally stayed away from school into the school community." The goal is to increase the overall involvement of parents and upgrade the quality of education in the community through active participation.

Topics of discussion in the six interactive workshop sessions (conducted in participants' language) include discovering leadership skills, goal setting and decision making, effective communication, parent rights and responsibilities, and celebrating learning. In June, 1999, PELT received the "Innovation in Education Award" for encouraging parental involvement in the educational process.

- *Family literacy programs* have been successful in creating home/school partnerships and in providing enjoyable intergenerational educational experiences. Based on the premise that the family literacy environment is the best predictor of a child's academic success, the goal of family literacy programs is to provide opportunities for children and parents to learn together. Programs may include book giveaways, lending libraries for parents, workshops on story book reading, early childhood programs, adult basic and parenting education, and coordination with other service providers.

  The Unity Project schools have all incorporated elements of family literacy programs into their family involvement activities (see sidebars throughout this document). Parents are encouraged to see themselves as important teachers, even if they have limited reading skills. For example, parents are encouraged to engage in a variety of enjoyable activities with their children, providing questions and comments that promote language development, and to view storytelling as an important literacy activity that lays the foundation for learning to read. Parents are encouraged to tell stories, sing songs, to read to children in their primary language, and to share knowledge of their culture, helping the child to connect their life outside the school with literacy activities.

- *Effective transition practices* between the home and school settings and between school settings help teachers build on children's strengths and experiences. Partnerships with local preschools and Head Starts—sharing professional development opportunities and celebrations—help ensure that children's early experiences prepare them for school. "These will be our kids," reminds Whittier's Jackie Ramirez.

  *Transitions to School* (1995), a publication focusing on recommended practices designed to facilitate a child's movement into kindergarten and the primary grades, summarizes what is known about successful early childhood transition services, and highlights existing policies and approaches. Effective practices include:

  - parent involvement
  - preparation of children for the transition
  - clear goals and objectives agreed upon by all parties involved
  - a shared commitment to the successful transitions of young children
  - shared decisionmaking among home, preschool, school, and community representatives
  - cultural sensitivity
  - specific assignments of roles and responsibilities among all parties, including interagency agreements, and
  - specific timelines for transition activities

  Careful attention to transitions between schools, including from elementary to middle school, plays an important role in helping children adapt to a new and often very different school setting. While all children benefit from continuity of experience, children from migrant families are particularly vulnerable to abrupt changes in schooling. In Pasco, a large percentage of school-aged children routinely travel from one state to another during the harvest season, returning to Pasco at spring break. The district has cooperated with the Texas school system (where many children attend school during the winter months) to educate parents about the importance of keeping up-to-date school records, including immunization, assessments, and eligibility for migrant services. By providing the, by now, familiar green packets for easy storage and transporting, registration of the approximately 500 students every spring is going smoothly.

- *After-School Programs* can provide an inviting, safe environment for children to engage in academic, cultural, artistic, and recreational activities. Although over 28 million children have parents who work outside the home, many of these children do not have access to affordable, quality care during the hours before and after school. There are an estimated five to seven million "latchkey children" who go home alone after school (Source: http://www.ed.gov/pubs/SafeandSmart).

  Quality after-school programs can provide much needed supervision of children during out-of-school hours, and can positively impact social interactions and academic achievement, particularly when they are links between school-day teachers and after-school personnel. Wellesley College's National Institute of Out-of-School Time has identified four desired outcomes for after-school programs and the children who participate in them:

- Relationships with caring, competent, and consistent adults
- Access to enriching learning activities
- Access to safe and healthy environments
- Partnerships with families, schools, and communities

A parent of a student at Whittier Elementary in Pasco (see Chapter II) expressed appreciation of the culturally relevant curriculum of her son's after school program, funded through a Comprehensive School Reform grant:

> We have tons of activities for children to do after school where the staff is paid. They have music and guitar playing taught by Mexican-American teachers, so it has more of a Mexican flavor to it. We have dance after school also taught by a Mexican teacher, so the kids learn traditional Mexican dances. Those, I think, are two very successful parts of encouraging our children, helping them to succeed by encouraging more than just the reading and the writing. I mean, the more exposure to more positive experiences at school, the better. They also provide tutoring after school for those children that are not learning or moving as quickly as they need to.

- Researchers have consistently found that *small schools*--a maximum of 800 students in high schools, 400 in elementary schools--are superior to large school on most measures of effectiveness. Students in small schools have more positive attitudes toward school, higher levels of extracurricular participation, better attendance, more positive social relations, lower dropout rates, and a greater sense of belonging. Student social behavior—as measured by truancy, discipline problems, theft, substance abuse, and gang participation--is more positive in small schools. Academic achievement is at least equal--and often superior--to that of large schools (Cotton, 1998). Education Secretary Riley recently endorsed small schools as the best solution to violence in schools is making schools smaller. "We need to find ways to create small, supportive learning environments that give students a sense of connection to each other," he said (Cooper, 1999).
- Just as assessment results are used to guide instruction, *program evaluation* guides planning and implementation. Although evaluation is often not the top priority for busy practitioners, evaluation can be a powerful tool for clarifying expectations, for improving services, and for procuring funding. According to Elaine Meeks, Principal at Cherry Valley Elementary School in Polson, Montana, the key to their continued success in obtaining grant monies is thorough and ongoing evaluation. She reports that they "evaluate everything. Teachers, parents, and children are included in the evaluation process of determining what works, why it works, what doesn't, and how to improve it."

## Conclusion

> *The way to improve education and society is to make schooling more central to family and community, while making family and community more central to schooling.* (Bronfenbrenner, 1985)

In *Growth of the Mind and the Endangered Origins of Intelligence,* authors Greenspan and Benderly (1997) observe, "The real ABCs come down to attention, strong relationships, and communication, all of which children must learn through interaction with adults" (p. 220). The parents we talked with stressed the important role that both families and teachers play in helping children develop these competencies. Parents viewed children's learning as a shared responsibility—teachers and families working together, "like a community" to support children. They highlighted the importance of caring and support, positive expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation—the same characteristics that have been found to foster resiliency for children. While the most frequently mentioned barrier to supportive relationships was lack of trust between teachers and parents, they offered many solutions to barriers to working together, including:

- Schools with a home-like atmosphere, with teachers and all staff who make families and children feel welcome "from the first time they step onto the school grounds"
- Opportunities to learn about their role as their children's first teacher
- Open communication, with multiple opportunities for families to engage positively with school staff
- Teachers and other school staff who speak the languages of children and families, preferably from the community
- School staff representing the ethnicity of children and families
- Curriculum that validates and reflects the cultures represented in the school
- Opportunities to discuss solutions to any problems before "they got out of hand"

During the first year of implementation, the Unity Project has helped participating schools and communities to form more effective partnerships with each other by including the voices of families who have often been reluctant to participate in school activities. The families we interviewed were excited about the opportunity to express their opinions about education, and their hopes for their own children, as well as their communities. Strong communities were seen to be dependent on "intellectually prepared children who grow up and give back to the community." Teachers were regarded as highly important role models in children's lives. One mother of four children expressed appreciation that her voice would be included in this report:

> Thank you also, for giving me the opportunity to share a little bit too, you know, about my opinions. Sometimes, you would like to say a lot. If something happens to you—a bad experience—you would like to have the opportunity to explain, so that they understand that, just like our children need the teachers, we also as parents need the teachers to have communication, and be strong for our children.

Clearly, in order for teachers to be "strong for our children," they need to be supported by their schools, communities, and society. Characteristics of environments that support learning by all include:

- Supportive and shared leadership
- Members who have a collective commitment to and shared responsibility for the goals of the organization
- A collaborative, non-isolatory work environment, and
- People who are in a continual process of learning and reflecting (Sagmiller, 1998)

But schools, even in strong partnerships with families and communities, cannot solve all of the inequities that result from unequal access to high quality health care and childcare, housing, nutrition, and safe neighborhoods. Even in "boom-time" America, 8.6 million kids live in working-poor families—a one-third increase since 1990; seventy percent of poor families with children included someone who works. According to Second Harvest, the biggest increase in hunger over the last 10 years has been among the working poor (Huffington, 2000). In her role as home visitor, Lopez is well aware that life is a daily struggle for many families—just to meet basic needs.

> I think for me, it has to come, it has to be something that the teacher, the parents, and students have to want to all be involved in. It's not just one person, it's a handful of different things coming together. My vision-what I see-is that kids are actually on a high wire and we're there as their safety net, the safety net being the parents, teachers, relatives, principal, community, and other students. If we're not there to catch them, if they were to fall off that wire, and say, "Well I've fallen and I really can't do anything else. There's nobody to help me, no one who cares." Then there's no safety net! So yes, they are going to fail. I see this a lot as a home visitor. Everybody is struggling to have their basic needs met.

As researchers Pianta and Walsh (1996) point out, "Poverty is hard on people and it is getting harder all the time." Yet, by understanding how children's developmental histories affect subsequent attitudes, behaviors, and adaptation to the school environment, schools can more effectively address the needs of children at risk for underachievement. In addition, by becoming informed advocates for children and by forming strong partnerships with families and community members, schools (as so many parents pointed out) can play a key role in strengthening an entire community, and in creating a more just and caring society. By supporting these ever-widening circles of inclusion, the Unity Project is helping to ensure that *each* child has the support they need for healthy development and optimal learning. Only then can Washington schools reach a primary Unity Project goal: from the bell curve to everyone; everyone will learn to high standards.

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181 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

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182

# Appendix A

## Assessment of the Current Reality of Washington's Children

Below are a number of statistical indicators of child well-being in the state of Washington, disaggregated by race and ethnicity.

### Population

- **Child population.** Children of color made up nearly 23 percent of Washington's children in 1998, up from 12 percent in 1980 (Washington Kids Count, 2000). In the 1999-2000 school year, Washington's public school children were 9.6 percent Hispanic, 7.2 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, 5.2 percent African American, 2.7 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, and 75.3 percent White (OSPI, 2000).
- **School staff.** In the 1999-2000 school year, full-time certificated staff were 1.9 percent Hispanic, 2.2 percent Asian, 1.8 percent Black, and 0.8 percent American Indian (OSPI, 2000). Classified noncertificated staff were 4.5 percent Hispanic, 3.4 percent Asian, 2.8 percent Black, and 1.4 percent American Indian (OSPI, 2000).
- **Immigrants and migrants.** Thirteen percent of Washington's Asian or Pacific Islander population and 7 percent of its Hispanic population immigrated to the US in the last seven years (Washington Kids Count, 2000). Nearly 3 percent of all students receive services through the migrant education program (OSPI, 2000).
- **English as primary language.** Thirty-four percent of the Hispanic population and 24 percent of the Asian and Pacific Islander population live in households where the primary language spoken is not English (Washington Kids Count, 2000). In all, 169 languages are spoken in Washington's 181 school districts, with 88 languages spoken in Seattle Public Schools alone (Malagon, personal communication). Statewide, only 5.1 percent of students participate in transitional bilingual programs (OSPI, 2000).

### School Performance

- **Student opinions of value of school.** More high school students of color (57 percent) than White students (43 percent) think the things they learn in school will be important for their later life. Specifically, 63 percent of Asian or Pacific Islander students, 57 percent of Hispanic students, 54 percent of African American students and 43 percent of Native American students think the things they learn in school will be important for their later life (Washington Kids Count, 2000). This runs counter to the myth that test-score gaps can be attributed to a lower value placed on learning by children of color (Washington Kids Count, 2000).

- **Student opinions of school work assigned.** More high school students place a high value on learning than on the quality of the school work they are assigned. Yet, children of color are still more likely to think that schoolwork assigned is meaningful and important (39 percent) than White children (28 percent). Furthermore, Asian or Pacific Islander youth (44 percent), Hispanic youth (38 percent), and African American youth (37 percent) are more likely than Native American youth (27 percent) to think schoolwork is meaningful and important (Washington Kids Count, 2000).
- **WASL scores.** Across all subjects, about 15 percent fewer students of color than White students met the basic standard in fourth grade, as measured by the 1999 Washington Assessment of Student Learning (Washington Kids Count, 2000). School-level data also show that at some schools, about 30 percent fewer children of color meet standards compared to White children.

**Percent of students meeting fourth-grade standards, 1999 - 2000**

| | Hispanic | Asian/Pacific Islander | African American | Native American | White |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Math | 18 | 46 | 19 | 25 | 47 |
| Reading | 39 | 67 | 48 | 47 | 72 |
| Writing | 21 | 50 | 25 | 23 | 43 |
| Listening | 46 | 61 | 52 | 54 | 70 |

- **Special education.** Black and Native American students are more likely to be placed in special education than other students are. Of all Washington students in special education in 1998, 6.8 percent were Black, 3.8 percent were Native American, 9.5 percent were Hispanic, 3.5 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander, and 76.4 percent were White, non-Hispanic (OSPI, 1999). In one Northwest school district, Native American students were enrolled in special education at twice their proportion in the school population. Native American students were also significantly underrepresented in gifted programs at this district.
- **Educational attainment of adults.** In 1998, about 83 percent of adults of color had at least a high school diploma, and 26 percent of adults of color had at least a bachelor's degree. This is somewhat lower than the percentage of White adults with at least a high school degree (about 94 percent), and the percentage of White adults with at least a Bachelor's degree (32 percent). About 70 percent of all Hispanic adults have at least a high school diploma, but this lower number is primarily due to the low levels of high school completion among Hispanic immigrants (only 43 percent) (Washington Kids Count, 2000). The 1990 Census found that among adults 25 years old and over in Washington, 85 percent of Whites held at least a high school diploma, compared to 81.2 percent of Blacks, 56.7 percent of Hispanics, 77.3 percent of Asians or Pacific Islanders, and 72.3 percent of American Indians or Alaska Natives. The disparities among college graduates are more pronounced; while 23.3 percent of Whites received at least a Bachelor's degree, only 15.4 percent of Blacks did the same, 11.0 percent of Hispanics, 30.2 percent of Asians or Pacific Islanders, and 9.1 percent of American Indians or Alaska Natives.

## Poverty

- **Poverty rate among children.** Among one of the lowest rates in the country, 11 percent of Washington's children lived below the poverty level in 1998, down from 15 percent in 1993 (Bennett & Lu, 2000). (In 1998, the poverty threshold for a family of four was $16,600.) However, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, the 1990 Census reported that in Washington, 30.5 percent of Black children, 34.0 percent of Hispanic children, 37.7 percent of Native American children, 20.0 percent of Asian or Pacific Islander children, and 11.9 percent of White children were poor. (In 1990, 14.5 percent of all of Washington's children were poor.)
- **Low-income families.** The 1998 Washington State Population Survey found that of all low-income working families with children (defined as households below 200% of the federal poverty level, or $33,200 for a family of four), 9.6 percent were Black, 4.4 percent were American Indian, 4.6 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander, and 81.3 percent were White. Additionally, 15.2 percent were of Hispanic origin, which can be of any race. Among working families with incomes above 200% of the federal poverty level, 2.1 percent were Black, 1.3 percent were American Indian, 6.2 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander, and 90.5 percent were White. Only 3.6 percent were of Hispanic origin. This illustrates the disparities of income and wealth between white people and people of color, despite the slightly higher percentages of full-time work among adults of color in low- to moderate- income households (48% of adults of color and 43% of White adults) (Washington Kids Count, 2000).
- **Family income.** The average family income of Hispanic, African American, and Native American families is $20,000 to $23,000 per year, about one third below the average White family income of $37,000 (Washington Kids Count, 2000). (Average family income of Asian families is $35,000.) Furthermore, more than half of adults of color with household income below about $24,000 per year have paid work (Washington Kids Count, 2000).
- **Health insurance coverage.** Most children lacking health insurance belong to the poorest fifth of Washington's households (Washington Kids Count, 2000). Lack of health insurance affects children of color at twice the rate of White children (12 percent versus 6 percent, respectively). One in six Hispanic and Native American children are not covered by health insurance, or 17 percent; 8 percent of Asian or Pacific Islander children and 6 percent of African American children are uninsured (Washington Kids Count, 2000).
- **Early child care.** The quality of early care has significant impacts on children's physical, emotional, cognitive and social development. However, there is concern that the quality of much nonparental care is too low to achieve optimum child development (Brandon, Kagan, & Joesch, 2000). A greater percentage of White households with children use paid child care (27 percent) than households of color with children (15 percent of Black and Native American households, 18 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander households, and 20 percent of Hispanic households). On average, children of color spend more hours (30 hours per week) in paid child care than do White children (25 hours per week) (Washington Kids Count, 2000).

## Health and Safety

- **Incarceration rates.** Among prisoners under State or Federal jurisdiction in Washington in 1996, 70.5 percent were White, 23.3 percent were Black, 3.0 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native, 2.4 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 15.1 percent were Hispanic, which can be of any race (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1999). The 1998 Washington State Population Survey reports that the distribution of the population by race and Hispanic status is 83.49 percent White, non-Hispanic, 3.24 percent Black, non-Hispanic, 1.62 percent American Indian, 5.63 percent Asian, and 6.03 percent Hispanic.

- **Juvenile detention rates.** A larger percentage of Hispanic, Native American, and African American youth are detained than their share of the total population. In 1997, 10 percent of youth in detention were Hispanic, 15 percent were African American, 4 percent were Native American, 4 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander, and 63 percent were White. The degree of disproportionate representation of most youth of color in detention declined from 1992 to 1997, but increased for Native American youth (Washington Kids Count, 2000).

- **Substance use.** There is little difference in level of substance use between youth of color and White youth. Among middle school youth, one in five White youth and youth of color report low use. Most high school students who use harmful substances (roughly one in three) report low use, with little difference in levels of use between youth of color and white youth (Washington Kids Count, 2000). (Low use is defined as up to five cigarettes per day, or alcohol or marijuana use one to five times per month, or use of hard drugs one to two times per month.)

- **Prenatal care.** Less than one percent of children born in 1998 were born to mothers who had no prenatal care. However, while 81 percent of children born to white mothers received prenatal care in the first trimester, 64 percent of Hispanic, 63 percent of African American, 66 percent of Native American, and 68 percent of Asian or Pacific Islander babies were born to a mother receiving prenatal care in the first semester (Washington Kids Count, 2000).

- **Children born to teen mothers.** In 1998, 7.6 percent of Hispanic children, 6.9 percent of African American children, 10.4 percent of Native American children, 2.3 percent of Asian or Pacific Islander children, and 3.2 percent of White children were born to teenage mothers (Washington Kids Count, 2000).

- **Child abuse and neglect.** Native American and African American children are victims of reported abuse or neglect at about three times the rate of other children. About 7.7 percent of Native American children, 5.7 percent of African American children, 2.5 percent of Hispanic children, 1.1 percent of Asian or Pacific Islander children, and 2.3 percent of White children are referred to and accepted by Child Protective Services for further investigation (Washington Kids Count, 2000). There are many factors that may contribute to a child being referred to Child Protective Services for suspected abuse and neglect, including poverty, rural isolation, a history of discrimination and poor service, and child protection workers who lack cultural competence and sensitivity.

# Appendix B

## School Abstracts

Below are descriptions of each demonstration school's demographics, goals and promising practices. The information listed was identified through school site visits, interviews, or reviews of school plans that were completed before May 2000. Many schools may be doing other promising activities that are not listed here. The schools are grouped according to the Think Tank to which they belong.

### African American

#### Edison Elementary
Tacoma, WA

**Demographics.** Of 599 kindergarten through fifth graders, 27% are Black, 9% are Asian, 8% are Hispanic, 1% are American Indian/Alaska Native, and 56% are White. Sixty-six percent of the students receive free and reduced lunch. Edison is located in South Tacoma. The neighborhood includes the Boys and Girls Club, Family Involvement Center, South Tacoma Neighborhood Council, South Park Community Center, community and technology colleges, and Tacoma Mall Shopping Center.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** The Unity Project goals are to increase parent involvement, improve academic achievement, and increase student attendance.

- School staff plan to work with the PTA and Head Start to increase parent awareness before the start of school about what children need to know when they enter kindergarten.
- A week-long Multicultural Extravaganza exposed children and parents to the cultures of the children in the school and reportedly brought staff together.
- Edison's Parent Involvement Committee, PTA, and local service clubs and businesses have worked to promote connections between schools and communities. This collaboration, led by a Parent Involvement Coordinator, has put together several family involvement events such as family fun nights, skating parties, autumn carnivals, fall and spring barbecues, Make-It—Take-It, family math nights, and parenting skills workshops. Volunteers from local businesses have also assisted with the reading program and served as mentors and tutors.
- Four additional teachers have been hired to provide more individualized and small-group literacy instruction for students in kindergarten through third grade and math instruction for students in third through fifth grade.

#### Lake City Elementary
Lakewood, WA

**Demographics.** Of 341 kindergarten through fifth graders, 27% are Black, 11% are Asian, 6% are Hispanic, 2% are American Indian/Alaska Native, and 54% are White. Seventy-four percent receive free and reduced lunch. The city of Lakewood lies five to ten miles southwest of the central business area and industrial employment center of Tacoma, and is bounded by Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities**. The Unity Project goal is to support kindergarten children as they move through the kindergarten experience.

- The school plans to work collaboratively with other day care directors and invite them to participate in monthly committees and family activities.
- School staff plan to develop a booklet on ways parents can help their child or be involved in the school. They also plan to conduct home visits with parents to explain support programs and resources, and to hand out packets that contain books and activities for the students.
- Students receive books each Friday and at the end of the school year, thus expanding opportunities for children to read at home.
- The PTA collaborates with the Success For All program to organize student and family activities, including monthly family nights, parent meetings prior to the start of school, informational meetings for parents, and tutoring. Over 30 percent of first and second graders receive tutoring for 20 minutes daily.

## McCarver Elementary

Tacoma, WA

**Demographics.** Of 402 kindergarten through fifth grade students, 39% are Black, 16% are Asian, 5% are Hispanic, 1% are American Indian/Alaska Native, and 38% are White. Eighty-eight percent receive free and reduced lunch. McCarver is located in upper Tacoma. The school has a latchkey program on-site and is within walking distance of a metropolitan park facility which houses a summer recreation and lunch program, a church, a hospital and a family support center. They receive student teachers from several nearby universities including the University of Washington-Tacoma and Evergreen State College.

**School Goals and Activities.** The goal of McCarver School is that all children will meet state standards. Their mission statement states their belief that literacy is the foundation for lifelong success. Specific activities of the school include:

- Class sizes have been reduced to 17 in first grade and 19 in second grade to provide more individualized instruction. Students in grades one and two, and in grades four and five, remain with their teacher for two years in order to build relationships between staff, parents, and students, and to allow for greater continuity and stability in the curriculum.
- The structure of school conferences has changed to "partnership conferencing", where parents and students set goals in partnership with teachers, based on school benchmarks.
- Family Fun Nights have brought families to the school on evenings and have helped create a sense of community. Parents and teachers have been able to meet under less threatening circumstances, and now each is more comfortable talking with the other about problems.
- Over 175 people from community businesses, the hospital, police, and the rotary clubs volunteer through the WERLIN program. Every first and second grader and almost half of the third graders have tutors.

## Meadows Elementary

Lacey, WA

**Demographics.** Of 430 kindergarten through sixth graders, 21% are Asian, 15% are Black, 7% are Hispanic, 1% are American Indian/Alaska Native, and 57% are White. Thirty-eight percent of the students receive free and reduced lunch. The Success Plus program (a blended special education and Chapter One program) provides academic assistance to 185 students. Lacey is located on the south end of the Puget Sound between Olympia and Fort Lewis.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** The Unity plan states a focus in improving parent involvement.

- The school has a strong relationship with New Life Baptist Church and uses their volunteers as a liaison between parents and the school. Church volunteers conduct home visits with hard to reach families and hold an after school tutoring program for students. The church plans to hold a retreat for the tutors of the tutoring

program to get their feedback as well as host a retreat for parents and students where they can create family academic improvement contracts. They also plan to hold a community group meeting where they create a calendar and tasks for activities at Meadows that community members can be involved in, including activities such as lunch buddies, preschool story hours, and family activities nights.

- The school plans to encourage families to tell their stories, including them in a newsletter and presentations about culture.
- The school is a hub of neighborhood activities, including those by the Parks and Recreation Department, Thurston County, homeowners associations, parent groups, YMCA, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, youth and adult groups, sport teams, churches, and non-profit agencies.
- The Multicultural Fair each spring and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration promote cultural awareness.
- Before and after school activities are offered to all students, including opportunities for performing arts, computer training, tutoring, morning read-aloud, and sports. The school has an instructional partnership with River Ridge High School. The Washington Reading Corps provides individualized, additional reading instruction to students using research-based methods.

## Southgate Elementary

Lakewood, WA

**Demographics.** Of 480 kindergarten through fifth graders, 34% are Black, 16% are Hispanic, 13% are Asian, 1% are American Indian/Alaska Native, and 37% are White. Eighty-six percent receive free and reduced lunch. Lakewood lies five to ten miles southwest of the central business area and industrial employment center of Tacoma, and is bounded by Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** The Unity Project goal is to increase school-parent involvement.

- School staff plan to set up appointments with parents to set joint goals in October.
- Teachers have committed to do more follow up with all parents of students in ECEAP through sixth grade.
- The school hopes to create a plan to implement a smoother transition throughout all grades.
- Southgate has a parent room where parents can come visit, work, bring their young children, and find out more about their children's school. The principal also conducts regular Coffee Chats with parents.
- The Washington Reading Corps provides individualized, additional reading instruction to students using research-based methods. Classroom volunteers come from the PTA, Rotary Club, and Just Ordinary Interested Neighbors (JOIN). In addition, a tutoring program is being established in a nearby apartment complex.
- Because most students are bussed from other neighborhoods, the school plans to find funding to bus students for summer school and other after school activities, thus giving all students access to these additional learning opportunities.

## Thurgood Marshall Elementary

Seattle, WA

**Demographics.** Of 326 kindergarten through fifth grade students, 71% are Black, 10% are Asian, 9% are Hispanic, 1% are American Indian/Alaska Native, and 9% are White. Seventy-five percent receive free and reduced lunch. Bilingual services are received by 16% of the students and 100% receive compensatory education services.

**School Goals and Activities.** Thurgood Marshall's school goal is that the instructional program will show measurable growth in academic achievement and observable growth in creativity, emotional maturity, physical well being and social responsibility by all students.

- Using Student Learning Improvement Allocation resources, the school conducted positive discipline and technology focused workshops for staff, parents, and community members.
- The parent room provides resources to parents. The school offers parents cultural arts events.
- The school works with parents to develop a contract that spells out what the school will do and what the parents will do.
- The Washington Reading Corps provides individualized, additional reading instruction to students using research-based methods. Volunteers at the school include senior citizens, parents, retired teachers, high school students, and members of Concerned Black Men, Inc. The school also works with the University of Washington, Seattle University, and Seattle Pacific University.
- A nearby family support center meets health, social, and emotional needs of families by providing mental health consultation, counseling, referral, and summer school classes for families.

## Asian and Pacific Islander

### Mark Twain Elementary

Federal Way, WA

**Demographics.** Of 644 Kindergarten through sixth graders, 25% are Black, 20% are Hispanic, 18% are Asian, 1% are American Indian/Alaska Native, and 37% are White. Sixty-three percent receive free and reduced lunch. ESL services are provided to 200 students, with students from Mexico, Ukraine, Lithuania, Russia, Korea, Vietnam, Philippines, Samoa, Ethiopia, El Salvador, Poland, and India. Federal Way is located in the southwestern corner of King County, approximately 25 miles south of downtown Seattle and 8 miles north of downtown Tacoma.

**School Goals and Activities.** Three of the school's goals are that school/family/community partnerships will be in place to reach out and involve all families in improving student learning, that all students will learn to use computer technology to practice basic skills, write, research and communicate, and that the number of students reading on or above grade level will increase.

- The School Leadership Team provides an organized forum by which parents, school, and community members can access and influence the school decision making process; improve student learning; assist in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the school's Learning Plan; and provide a flow of information to and from school, parents, and the community related to school goals and expectations.
- The Family Support Team works with parents to promote parent involvement, developing plans to meet the needs of individual students having difficulty, implementing attendance plans, and integrating community and school resources. Some family involvement programs include the Second Cup of Coffee/Parent Club, Raising Readers Parent Workshops, parenting classes, Donuts and Dad, Muffins with Mom, Harvest Read-in and Storyteller Read-In. In fall 2000 they plan to visit the homes of all first graders. They also plan to establish a parent-to-parent communications network, especially among ESL families.
- Transience is quite high at the school. New students and their parents are introduced to the school by the student and family advocates. The school also created a welcome room for all new families.
- Monthly family reading nights encourages family involvement in reading and provides books to children to take home. They plan to conduct some reading nights in several languages.
- The Washington Reading Corps provides individualized, additional reading instruction to students using research-based methods.

## Roosevelt Elementary

Tacoma, WA

**Demographics.** Of 357 kindergarten through fifth grade students, 23% are Asian, 19% are Black, 8% are Hispanic, 7% are American Indian/Alaska Native, and 43% are White. Eighty-two percent receive free and reduced lunch. Seventy-nine percent of the students come from English-speaking homes. Roosevelt is located on the east side of Tacoma in a multi-
cultural neighborhood.

**School Goals and Activities.** The school goal of Roosevelt is to increase the number of students meeting the WASL standards.

- Roosevelt uses an integrated curriculum with a focus on science and technology. With the Eisenhower Professional Development Grant they are exploring ways to teach literacy through math and science. Each morning, several students produce a daily television broadcast is viewed in every classroom. Students write the news and weather, operated cameras, work as announcers and make special presentations.
- Students remain with the same teacher for two-year blocks, which allows for greater continuity and stability in the curriculum and relationships between parents and families.
- Some students are involved in a cultural dance group with is supervised by ESL staff and leaders in the Cambodian community.
- The School-Centered Decision-Making Team made up of staff, parents and community members oversees the programs and practices at Roosevelt.
- Volunteers tutor, prepare materials, and supervise field trips, plan activities and mentor. Roosevelt has strong partnerships with Pioneer Chemical and the Port of Tacoma, whose employees spend their lunch hours with students as mentors and tutors.
- The nearby family support center provides after school and summer activities for students and their families and works to prepare students to enter school ready to learn. In addition, a daycare facility in the building operates between 6:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Other family-focused programs operating onsite include ESL classes, youth organizations, parenting classes and
recreational groups.

## Salmon Creek Elementary

Burien, WA

**Demographics.** Of 389 preschool through sixth grade students, 40% are Asian, 14% are Hispanic, 12% are Black, 6% are American Indian/Alaska Native, and 28% are White. Sixty-nine percent receive free and reduced lunch. Burien lies on Puget Sound waterfront adjacent to the Sea-Tac airport.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** Goals for the Unity Project are to increase cultural awareness by educating the community about cultural diversity and the customs of their population, and to help parents feel comfortable in school by getting them involved through something that is non-threatening and does not require
English-speaking ability.

The school plans to hold a cultural fair and invite families to bring food, dress in clothes representing their culture, and entertain.

- Salmon Creek uses a reading program that emphasizes comprehension and thinking skills.

# Hispanic

## Adams Elementary

Wapato, WA

**Demographics.** Of the 318 first through fifth grade students enrolled at Adams, 60% are Hispanic, 28% are American Indian/Alaska Natives, 3% are Asian, 1% are Black, and 8% are White. Ninety percent receive free or reduced lunch. Located within the Yakima Indian Reservation and 10 miles from the city of Yakima, Wapato has a population of 3700. Agriculture is the community's primary economic source.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** The three Unity Project schools in Wapato School District (Adams, Camas, and Satus) are working together to develop their project plan. Their goal for the Unity Project is to increase parent involvement in the schools.

- The school plans to increase parent volunteers by distributing a list of suggested volunteer activities, conducting a survey of volunteers and having it reviewed by parents, training volunteers and staff who work with them, and recognizing volunteers.
- The school plans to hold monthly parent meetings with a parent-school liaison.

## Camas Elementary

Wapato, WA

**Demographics.** Of 498 first through fifth graders, 56% are Hispanic, 33% are American Indian/Alaska Native, 4% are Asian, and 7% are White. Ninety-five percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch. Wapato is located within the Yakima Indian Reservation and 10 miles from the city of Yakima. Agriculture is the community's primary economic source.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** The three Unity Project schools in Wapato School District (Adams, Camas, and Satus) are working together to develop their project plan. Their goal for the Unity Project is to increase parent involvement in the schools.

- The school plans to increase parent volunteers by distributing a list of suggested volunteer activities, conducting a survey of volunteers and having it reviewed by parents, training volunteers and staff who work with them, and recognizing volunteers.
- The school plans to hold monthly parent meetings with a parent-school liaison.

## Concord Elementary

Seattle, WA

**Demographics.** Of 260 kindergarten through fifth grade students, 38% are Hispanic, 21% are Asian, 13% are Black, 6% are American Indian/Alaska Native, and 22% are White. Seventy-eight percent receive free and reduced lunch. Bilingual services are received by 39% of the students and 100% receive compensatory education services.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** Goals for the Unity Project are to develop strategies to increase Hispanic families' participation in the community and school, and to collaborate with other minority groups to ensure the success of their children.

- Concord uses the performing arts, inquiry-based science, and social studies to accelerate literacy. They use drama to give children the opportunity to re-read a script with purpose, bring meaning to the printed word to develop their characters, and learn that through their hard work and teamwork they can accomplish great things. Other hands-on opportunities to learn are provided through the Concord News Team, where students learn

journalism and video production techniques, conduct interviews with community members, write scripts and film news sequences.

- Concord offers after-hours classes for students and adults, including computer ESL, Spanish language, and strengthening family's classes. For students, they offer after school tutoring, including a cultural tutorial program, and before and after school sports.
- Concord has partnerships with Wall Data, Inc. (an international software company), and EDS, Inc. (a vendor of Wall Data). Volunteers from Wall Data have taught students about the world of work and economic theory and EDS has provided computers and technology support.
- The Washington Reading Corps uses community volunteers to provide individualized, additional reading instruction to students using research-based methods.
- Concord holds monthly family dinner and education nights.
- A family involvement committee separate from the PTA has been established where parents and staff can discuss their problems.

## Garfield Elementary

Toppenish, WA

**Demographics.** Of 495 kindergarten through fifth grade students, 82% are Hispanic, 11% are American Indian/Alaska Native, 1% are Black, and 6% are White. Ninety-two percent of the students receive free and reduced lunch. Toppenish is located in the Yakima Valley, famous for growing apples, cherries and hops. The Yakima Indian Reservation is nearby.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** The goals for the Unity Project are to communicate school expectations to community preschools, churches, and agencies; to increase kindergarten parent involvement in literacy development; and to provide families with activities they can use at home that will benefit student learning. The three Unity Project schools in Toppenish School District (Garfield, Kirkwood, and Lincoln) are working together to implement activities.

- The school is working more closely with preschools by holding dinners for school staff and day care providers to discuss readiness expectations for children entering kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers are also visiting preschools to explain expectations of the school for entering kindergarten students.
- The school plans to hold luncheons between school staff and local agencies and faith-based organizations to discuss strategies for connecting schools, families, and agencies.
- Monthly family nights for kindergarten students and their parents educate parents about ways to help their children learn and involve students and parents in literacy activities. Families are given books and resources to take home.
- The Washington Reading Corps uses community volunteers to provide individualized, additional reading instruction to students using research-based methods.
- The school is starting a mariachi band for students.

## Kirkwood Elementary

Toppenish, WA

**Demographics.** Of 855 kindergarten through fifth grade students, 70% are Hispanic, 20% are American Indian/Alaska Native, and 9% are White. Ninety-one percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch. Toppenish is located near the Yakima Indian Reservation, famous for growing apples, cherries and hops.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** Kirkwood's goals for the Unity Project is to increase parent involvement and improve student achievement. The three Unity Project schools in Toppenish School District (Garfield, Kirkwood, and Lincoln) are working together to implement activities.

- The school is working more closely with preschools by holding dinners for school staff and day care providers to discuss readiness expectations for children entering kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers are also visiting preschools to explain expectations of the school for entering kindergarten students.
- The school plans to hold luncheons between school staff and local agencies and faith-based organizations to discuss strategies for connecting schools, families, and agencies.
- Family literacy and math nights for students and their parents educate parents about the school's curriculum and involve families in relevant activities. Families are given books and resources to take home.
- First grade classrooms offer family nights for students who are at risk and struggling to keep up in school. Dinner is provided and parents are given suggestions on how to help their children at home with homework and prepare them for school.
- At the spring Multicultural Celebration, students perform dances from many cultures. The program is held at a theater in the Native American community.
- The Washington Reading Corps uses community volunteers to provide individualized, additional reading instruction to students using research-based methods.

## Lincoln Elementary

Toppenish, WA

**Demographics.** Of 508 kindergarten through fifth grade students, 84% are Hispanic, 10% American Indian/Alaska Native, 1% are Asian, 1% are Black, and 5% are White. Ninety percent of the students receive free and reduced lunch. Toppenish is located in the Yakima Valley, famous for growing apples, cherries and hops. The Yakima Indian Reservation is nearby.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** The goals for the Unity Project are to communicate school expectations to community preschools, churches, and agencies; and to increase kindergarten parent involvement in literacy development. The three Unity Project schools in Toppenish School District (Garfield, Kirkwood, and Lincoln) are working together to implement activities.

- The school is working more closely with preschools by holding dinners for school staff and day care providers to discuss readiness expectations for children entering kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers are also visiting preschools to explain expectations of the school for entering kindergarten students.
- The school plans to hold luncheons between school staff and local agencies and faith-based organizations to discuss strategies for connecting schools, families, and agencies.
- Family nights for kindergarten students and their parents educate parents about ways to help their children learn and involve students and parents in literacy activities. Families are given books and resources to take home.
- The Washington Reading Corps uses community volunteers to provide individualized, additional reading instruction to students using research-based methods.
- Students can participate in Service Learning activities, with tasks such as conflict manager, computer tutors, and reading buddies. The school's web site was designed by a group of students who chose the topics, wrote articles, and took pictures.

## Red Rock Elementary

Royal City, WA

**Demographics.** Of 702 kindergarten through fifth grade students, 67% are Hispanic and 32% are White. Eighty-one percent of the students receive free and reduced lunch.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** Red Rock's goal for the Unity Project is for students to read at grade level by the end of third grade.

- The school is developing travel packets for it's migrant students who are going to Mexico for the winter. The packets will include post cards, reading activities, maps, journals, and disposable cameras. The school is also developing summer take home packets for preschool and kindergarten that contain crayons, pencils, paper, and magnetic letters.
- The school works with the Migrant Center to transition students into the school system. They are also working to develop a tracking system to communicate with other schools the academic progress and attendance of students when students move between schools.
- The school is working to hand out a variety of reading materials for students to keep at home, in English and Spanish.
- The Washington Reading Corps uses community volunteers to provide additional reading instruction to students using research-based methods. The school especially encourages fathers to participate.

## Satus Elementary

Wapato, WA

**Demographics.** Of 872 kindergarten through fifth graders at Satus Elementary, 67% are Hispanic, 23% are American Indian/Alaska Native, 2% are Asian, and 7% are White. Wapato is located within the Yakima Indian Reservation and 10 miles from the city of Yakima. Agriculture is the community's primary economic source.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** The three Unity Project schools in Wapato School District (Adams, Camas, and Satus) are working together to develop their project plan. Their goal for the Unity Project is to increase parent involvement in the schools.

- The school plans to increase parent volunteers by distributing a list of suggested volunteer activities, conducting a survey of volunteers and having it reviewed by parents, training volunteers and staff who work with them, and recognizing volunteers.
- The school plans to hold monthly parent meetings with a parent-school liaison.

## Whittier Elementary

Pasco, WA

**Demographics.** Of 543 kindergarten through sixth graders, 86% are Hispanic, 5% are Black, 1% are Asian, and 8% are White. Ninety-eight percent of the students receive free and reduced lunch. Located in the Yakima Valley, a large number of migrant families came to Pasco to pick fruit and vegetables and have now settled there to work in the food processing plants. Most of the children of these migrant families are second generation English-language learners. The school is only a few years old and teachers were hired knowing what the school population was like.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** The Unity Project goal of Whittier is to effectively communicate between the home and the school.

- Whittier emphasizes primary language instruction because many of the children do not have a strong foundation in either their home or the English language. They also emphasize oral language and concept development. They use the Rinzulli model, an enrichment and higher order thinking skills model.
- The school works with the Head Starts by doing staff development together, and sharing the library and computer lab.
- Whittier has an after school program that includes tutoring, and over half of the staff participates.
- Whittier has one full time home visitor on staff. The home visitor, literacy coach and teacher aides go to all of the homes of incoming kindergartners. They bring resources (including a walkman and cassettes) and help families access services.
- The PTA hosts family games, parent information nights about the WASL, math nights, a harvest festival, and a Cinco de Mayo dinner.
- In order to increase communication between teachers and parents, the school plans to create a school newspaper, with articles written by teachers. They also plan to create a touchline that parents can call to find out information or leave messages for school staff.

## Native American

### Chief Leschi Elementary

Puyallup, WA

**Demographics.** Of 1045 kindergarten through twelfth grade students, 88% are American Indian/Alaska Native, 3% are Black, 2% are Hispanic, 1% are Asian, and 6% are White. Operated by the Puyallup Tribe, Chief Leschi serves Native American students from 92 different tribes who come from as far south as Lacey and as far north as Federal Way. It is the largest tribal school that has been funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. They opened a new facility in 1996 that features Native American architecture and measures 200,000 square feet.

**School Goals and Activities.** Chief Leschi's school goal is to give hope and encouragement to each student to reach his/her full potential academically, emotionally, socially, physically and spiritually and to encourage each student to become a life long learner.

- Native American culture is fused in to the school's curriculum. Every day preschool through sixth grade students participate in the drum and dance group, where children can sing, drum, dance, or watch others participate. Students learn many types of Northwest coastal songs, including songs that teach how to count or name days of the week and months in the Southern Puget Salish language. This activity improves self-esteem, pride and self-identity for children. It also promotes parental involvement as some parents help make clothes and drums for students.
- The bilingual program is designed to enhance both English and the Southern Puget Salish languages, resulting in higher academic achievement and a greater sense of self-identity. They have found the most effective method is integrating Sough Puget Salish songs with lessons. Classes in Southern Puget Salish are also offered to adults.
- The school plans to expand its reading nights to include more education for parents about reading and communicating with children.
- The school emphasizes early learning and parental involvement by offering both Head Start and FACE (Family and Child Education). FACE is a Bureau of Indian Affairs program based on the concepts of the National Center of Family Literacy, Parents as Teachers, and the Hi/Scope Foundation that also integrates Native American cultural values and teachings as they relate to parenting. It offers home-based programs for caregivers and children from birth to three years of age and center-based programs for caregivers and children ages three to five. The caregiver is taught about child development, behavior modification, learning styles and parenting skills. The adult is also prepared for employment through GED, college preparation, job preparation or other courses.

- The Safe Futures Community Schools program partners with several local community organizations to encourage and improve sobriety, community service, mental and physical health, family education, and individual worth.
- On special occasions the school sponsors a powwow to provide an opportunity for children and community members to join in the promotion of their Native American heritage.

## Harrah Elementary

Harrah, WA

**Demographics.** Of 638 kindergarten through fifth grade students, 62% are American Indian/Alaska Native, 25% are Hispanic, and 12% are White. Seventy-one percent of the students receive free and reduced lunch. Harrah is located on the Yakima Indian Reservation.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** Harrah's Unity Project goals are to increase parent involvement with their students' social and academic achievement at school and to provide families with culturally relevant activities that they can do at home which will benefit student learning. The school initiates compacts for reading with parents and students.

- Staff training time spent on parent involvement was increased and improved.
- A community feedback session at the Indian Agency allowed parents to give suggestions to teachers.
- An active Indian Parent Group also makes recommendations to the school.
- The school is planning a parent training program for the 2000-2001 school year.
- At the All Indian Rodeo and Community Days, two teachers set up an area where students could be read to.
- The school is working to develop relations with the tribal newspaper.

## Hood Canal Elementary

Shelton, WA

**Demographics.** Of 383 preschool through eighth grade students, 32% are American Indian/Alaska Native, 1% are Black, 1% are Hispanic, and 65% are White. Sixty-seven percent receive free and reduced lunch. Hood Canal is located on the Skokomish Reservation on the Olympic Peninsula. Industries in the area include logging and fishing.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** The Unity Project goal is to enhance community-school relations, especially targeting kindergarten and first grade.

- School staff are holding monthly meetings with families of children targeted by the Unity Project in order to build relationships.
- The Heritage Project is a partnership between Hood Canal and Taholah Schools, ESD 113, and the Skokomish and Quinault Tribes. Student participants receive training on multimedia computers and use them to create virtual museums of Native American culture and artifacts.
- With Title IX funding (Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native Education), the school plans to conduct home visits with each child in kindergarten through third grade next year.
- The Indian Parent Education Committee provides input into policies, curricula and programs of school.
- To develop and implement a plan for the Unity Project, the school district and Skokomish Tribe developed a Memorandum of Agreement, thus involving the Tribe from the beginning.

- Under the Washington Reading Corps, tribal employees have one hour per week release time to volunteer in the school.
- The Tribe provides Twana language classes in the middle school for students.
- The Tribal Head Start provides a cultural curriculum and is working to collaborate with Hood Canal School.
- The school has agreed to provide more community events at the school, and encourage community groups to use the school for workshops, GED and technology classes.
- The schools initiates compacts for reading with parents and students.

## Neah Bay Elementary

Neah Bay, WA

**Demographics.** Of 359 kindergarten through twelfth grade students, 92% are American Indian/Alaska Native, 1% are Black, and 6% are White. Seventy-six percent receive free and reduced lunch. Neah Bay is located on the Makah Indian Reservation.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** The goals for the Unity Project are to improve reading scores and to involve families in helping their child learn at school and in the home, especially among kindergarten and first grade students who are having reading difficulties.

- The school plans to have bi-monthly meetings of the kindergarten and first grade teachers, special education and bilingual teacher, and principal to discuss students who are having difficulties and to develop individual objectives for each student.
- Teachers plan to contact parents monthly to discuss academic progress.
- Teachers plan to provide literacy activities for parents to do at home with their children and to hold family reading nights.
- The school is working to increase the utilization of community experts in ethno-botany, ethno-biology, art, music and dance in the classroom.
- The Washington Reading Corps uses community volunteers to provide additional reading instruction to students using research-based methods.

## Nespelem Elementary

Nespelem, WA

**Demographics.** Of the 212 preschool through eighth grade students, 97% are American Indian/Alaska Native, and 3% are White. Eighty-one percent receive free and reduced lunch. Nespelem is located on the Colville Indian Reservation.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** Nespelem's goals for the Unity Project are to increase communication between the tribe and school to enhance their working relationship, and to increase parent involvement.

- The school plans to work with the tribe to develop workshops for parents.
- An active Parent Education Committee is working to address physical, mental and emotional health needs of students.
- The Books and Babies program throws a monthly shower for parents of children 12 months old and younger. At the shower, school staff explain the importance of reading and how parents can help their child develop literacy. Books and other resources are given to the parents to take home.
- The Washington Reading Corps uses community volunteers to provide additional reading instruction to students using research-based methods.

## Taholah Elementary

Taholah, WA

**Demographics.** Of 254 kindergarten through twelfth grade students, 94% are American Indian/Alaska Native, 4% are Asian, and 2% are White. Sixty-one percent receive free and reduced lunch. Taholah is located on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, within the Quinault Reservation.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** The goal of the Unity Project is to improve communication between Taholah School and the Quinault Nation community.

- The tribe would like to work with the school to start a journalism class that will publish a quarterly school newspaper and an annual yearbook. The tribal newspaper has been publishing articles about students' sports and academic achievements, as well as articles about the Unity Project.
- The Heritage Project is a partnership between Hood Canal and Taholah Schools, ESD 113, and the Skokomish and Quinault Tribes. Student participants receive training on multimedia computers and use them to create virtual museums of Native American culture and artifacts.
- The Washington Reading Corps uses community volunteers to provide additional reading instruction to students using research-based methods.
- The school uses compacts for reading with their parents and students.

## Tulalip Elementary

Marysville, WA

**Demographics.** Of 338 kindergarten through sixth graders, 69% are American Indian/Alaska Native, 1% are Hispanic, 1% are Asian, and 29% are White. Eighty-nine percent receive free and reduced lunch. Tulalip Elementary is located near the Tulalip Indian Reservation, about 30 miles north of Seattle.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** The goal for the Unity Project is to improve assessment scores in language arts and math.

- The fourth grade Tulalip-based classroom (TBC), which is team-taught by one school district teacher and one Tribal teacher, uses Tulalip language, literature and culture to satisfy state benchmarks. The TBC classroom participates in the school's Success For All program, but uses Tulalip and Puget Sound literature. Some classes are taught in Lushootseed. Math, science, and language arts units are based on themes important to Tulalip culture such as Tulalip number concept, calendar, computation, scientific classification, and linguistic forms.
- Tulalip tribal representatives and school and district staff have been meeting to discuss the underachievement of Tulalip students and racism in the schools.
- In the Second Cup of Coffee program teachers bring coffee and donuts to parents as they drop their kids off in the morning, which serves as a non-threatening way for parents and teachers to meet. Teachers also meet regularly with community and tribal members for breakfast at a local restaurant to develop strategies for improving student performance on the WASL.
- The school plans to hold a parenting workshop, titled "How to Help Your Child Learn".
- The Washington Reading Corps uses community volunteers to provide additional reading instruction to students using research-based methods.

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# Project Achievement

## David Wolfle Elementary

Kingston, WA

**Demographics.** Of 537 kindergarten through sixth grade students, 19% are American Indian/Alaska Native, 3% are Hispanic, 2% are Asian, 1% are Black, and 74% are White. Thirty-three percent receive free and reduced lunch. Located on the Kitsap Peninsula in the Puget Sound, Wolfle is close to both the Port Gamble S'Klallam and Suquamish Indian Reservations.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** Wolfle's goal for the Unity Project is to form community linkages to assist in developing literacy in reading, writing/spelling, speaking, listening, viewing, and math. Specific activities implemented to address this goal include:

- Early literacy nights increase parental involvement in early literacy by teaching parents ways to integrate and encourage reading in the home. Children ages 3-8 participate in their own seminars to become active readers. These nights become culturally relevant events when topics such as oral traditions are discussed. The location of the literacy nights switches between the school and the tribal center, thus reaching out to parents who live on the reservation.
- The Washington Reading Corps increases the opportunities provided for students to improve literacy skills. The program provides one-on-one tutors for a half hour every day for all third graders and half of the second graders. Parents, local Marines, and community and business people volunteer as tutors, art docents, or mentors during recess and lunch hours.
- The school is in the process of developing a salmon curriculum to apply literacy, math and science activities in a culturally relevant way.
- The meaningful work program provides children an opportunity to hold a "job" at the school, applying literacy and math activities through school to work efforts. Students go through the real-life experiences of filling out an application, interviewing, and attending staff meetings.
- Early intervention and transitional support has been increased by introducing parents of preschoolers to the school by meeting with a panel of kindergarten parents. The school plans to host a similar meeting between kindergarten and first grade parents next year.
- The S'Klallam Tribe has been conducting a series of meetings throughout the past year with the district administration to discuss the underachievement of S'Klallam students and racism in the school, which has increased the communication between Native American parents and the school.
- Business involvement in children's education is exemplified through the Albertson Reads program, which holds storytime for children at the grocery store on Saturdays.
- The Native American Education Program provides tutoring, educational, and cultural opportunities for students and acts as a liaison between teachers and parents.
- The school initiates compacts for reading with parents and students.

## Naval Avenue Elementary

Bremerton, WA

**Demographics.** Of 441 kindergarten through fifth grade students, 15% are Asian, 12% are Black, 7% are Hispanic, 5% are American Indian/Alaska Native, and 61% are White. Sixty-nine percent receive free and reduced lunch. Bremerton is located at the south end of the Kitsap Peninsula in the Puget Sound, and is the location of Puget Sound Naval Shipyard.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** Naval Avenue's goal is to create a partnership between school, family and community to support the attainment of academic standards for all children. Specific activities implemented to address this goal include:

- The take home program provides kindergarten through second grade students with packets to take home every day to do with their parents, which include a book with corresponding activities that is aligned with Washington's Essential Academic Learning Requirements, information cards, and feedback forms. In addition to providing children with opportunities to read and be read to, they encourage parent involvement and educate parents in a non-threatening way.
- Kindergarten teachers meet with their students and parents quarterly to demonstrate successful teaching strategies that the parents can use. They are also creating a videotape that parents will be able to borrow illustrating reading strategies.
- At the annual Young Writers Conference, multi-age groups of children and teachers present their written compositions and critique each other's work. They then attend workshops put on by all school staff and a multitude of parent and community volunteers who share their interests and do enriching hands-on activities with the children.
- The Washington Reading Corps uses community volunteers to provide additional reading instruction to students using research-based methods.

## West Hills Elementary

Bremerton, WA

**Demographics.** Of 413 Kindergarten through fifth grade students, 20% are Black, 14% are Asian, 7% are Hispanic, 6% are American Indian/Alaska Native, and 53% are White. Seventy-four percent receive free and reduced lunch. Bremerton is located at the south end of the Kitsap Peninsula in the Puget Sound, and is the location of Puget Sound Naval Shipyard.

**Unity Project Goals and Activities.** West Hills' Unity Project goal is to increase kindergarten parent involvement in literacy development. Their strategy is to build parent partnerships through connecting with local community centers, skill centers, Head Start programs and church groups, and to build parent focus groups to discuss their needs and the school's expectations.

- West Hills plans to hold 30-minute monthly meetings during the kindergarten day with kindergarten parents where fun activities, art and songs are done with a focus on reading.
- Books were given away and parents were oriented to learning strategies at family nights.
- The Washington Reading Corps uses community volunteers to provide additional reading instruction to students using research-based methods.

# Appendix C

## A Brief History of Major Ethnic Groups in Washington

One way to begin to better understand people of color and the origins of racism in the United States is to study our history. Most of us have a poor understanding of the history of our country, and the history that we do know has been presented from a Western European perspective. To help begin this process, we have provided a few paragraphs regarding the history of people of color in Washington. In actuality, our history is much richer than these few pages would show, and we caution that this is only a starting point.

### African American

One of the first African Americans to settle in the state, pioneer George Washington Bush, arrived in Washington in 1845. Although slaves were occasionally held in Washington state, Bush was able to legally purchase and own property in Washington, unlike in Oregon. When the Donation Land Act of 1850 limited ownership claims to Whites, Bush's friends in the Territorial legislature petitioned Congress, and made him the only African American to receive a Donation Land Grant in Washington. However, similar efforts by his friends to let him vote were overruled. It is said that Bush financed the westward journey of some of his White Missouri neighbors and provided hospitality to many pioneers.

The number of African American settlers in Washington grew slowly, and those who came were primarily only able to find work in coal mining. It was not until World War II that African Americans came to the Pacific Northwest in large numbers. A variety of industrial jobs opened up for African Americans for the first time once available White workers had been absorbed by the war effort. African Americans were recruited from the Southern states to work in wartime shipbuilding, airplane and aluminum manufacture, and construction of the plutonium production plant at Hanford.

As African Americans built their communities, churches played an important role. "The church was the first organization that the majority in each community gathered around and supported. Traditionally the center of social life, the identity of the Black community is rooted here. Long an affirmation of its organizers, the church was independent of White domination and largely defined by its members' ideas of how religion should be expressed. Since the eighteenth century, organized religion has been the strongest institution in the Black community in America, " states Esther Hall Mumford (1989), historian and author of several books on Seattle's African American history. Community meetings, socials, and musical and literary programs were held in churches. In addition, churches raised funds for Black colleges and gave scholarships to local

students. Black Baptists started the city of Ronald's first school in 1890, which taught both African American and White children. Churches further provided meeting space to civil rights groups such as the Congress for Racial Equality and the Black Panther Party. Members of clergy have often been the most articulate and visible in civil rights campaigns.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the nonviolent approach to advocating for civil rights, exemplified by the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., gave way to a more militant form of resistance. Fueled by impatience and a thwarted sense of justice, a younger generation demanded immediate access to Constitutionally granted rights and privileges. Mumford notes that not all of their actions were productive or progressive, and in the latter part of sixties, Seattle had one of the highest firebombing and sniping rates in the United States. The Seattle Black Panthers was the second chapter organized in the nation in 1969. While they were eyed as outlaws by much of the public, the Black Panthers established a free clinic, statewide sickle-cell anemia testing program, prison visitation programs, tutoring programs, and a free breakfast program for poor children which they operated for more than a decade. They also pressed for expanded opportunities for African Americans in the construction trades and fought for an increase in African American faculty and an Equal Opportunities Program for low-income students at the University of Washington.

African American women have a history of high involvement in the labor market. Until the 1970s, African American women were more likely to work outside their homes than women from any other group in Washington (Mumford, 1989). These women were usually confined to working in the homes of the more affluent, keeping boarders, or taking in ironing and sewing. In the 1960s women limited their ambitions to nursing, teaching, or secretarial services, but even these traditionally women's jobs were hard to obtain. Mumford notes that beginning in the late nineteenth century several Black women came to Washington with the credentials and experience necessary to teach, but were generally not able to obtain these positions in Seattle until after World War II.

African Americans are now represented in a much broader range of jobs in Washington than at any other time in the state's history. However, the progress has come at a high price. Many African Americans deal with work environments where they encounter the use of racial epithets, discrimination in promotions, or a constant discrediting of their ideas. Many who receive this treatment report elevated blood pressure and the need for extended psychological counseling and therapy due to the stresses and harassment on their jobs. This stress has also been identified as a probable cause of the prevalence of hypertension among African Americans. Yet many stay in these environments because they feel well-paying jobs for Blacks are few and far between (Mumford, 1989).

Often overlooked in classroom curricula are the African American influences on American speech and language, culture, and ideals of personal freedom and democracy. Claude M. Steele (1992) discusses how this lack of value contributes to the disidentification of African American students with school, contributing to low performance. As one Washington teacher states, "How can a Black child be proud when the only contribution of their people they see in history class is slavery?"

## "Waiting for a Miracle"

*The following excerpt from the article "No Need to Wait for a Miracle" by Dr.James Comer of the Yale University Child Study Center is included in the African American Think Tank's Strategic Plan, titled "Education of African American Children in the State of Swashington: A Call to Arms." The Strategic Plan cites Dr.Comer in response to the often asked question: "How have other racial and ethnic groups come to this country and succeeded when African Americans have not after all these years?" Dr. Comer States:*

Black Americans have experienced four devastating shocks, the effects of which are even now not fully understood. The first was the disruption of a close-knit African kinship structure that was at the core of all political, economic, and social functioning. The second shock was the middle passage and the brutality of the slave trade. The third shock was two-and-a half centuries of slavery with its imposed dependency, inferior status, and no opportunity for improvement. The fourth—release of slaves into a hostile environment in both the North and the South—stripped African Americans of what little protection slave masters provided them as valued property, leaving them neither slaves nor citizens.

Even after the Fourteenth Amendment in 1866 made blacks citizens, private and public institutions and individuals denied blacks rights and opportunities. Efforts to enter the political and economic mainstream were blocked through violence and subterfuge. Without cultural cohesion and access to society's primary political, economic, and social structures, African Americans remained a despised caste group and permanent scapegoats. Blacks were denied the knowledge, skills, contacts, power, and information that could only be gained through interaction with mainstream political and economic networks.

As a result, huge disparities in investment in black and white education took place at every level—as much as 25 times more was spent on primary and secondary education for whites. Through such devices as local tax-based school funding, huge disparities still exist. Today's postindustrial information economy requires a higher level of education and social development. Because of past underinvestment in black education, blacks have suffered first and most.

Since effective civil rights legislation was not enacted until the mid-1960s, it has been necessary to move from uneducated and unskilled to highly educated and highly skilled in just one generation rather the three generations available to other immigrant groups. African Americans whose experiences supported adequate development and who were prepared to handle racial antagonisms without behaving self-destructively were able to make the transition and now have more opportunity than ever. The most marginalized group of blacks, however, is on a downhill course that accelerates with each new generation.

The argument that these many complex structural forces could be overcome by school integration and other civil rights legislation in 30 years—with no significant economic power—is patently unrealistic. It is simply an effort to avoid taking responsibility for the illegal, irresponsible, and immoral acts imposed on African Americans in the past and the present and their effects. The United States is a corporate entity, and for present-day citizens to deny responsibility for past acts is like inheriting a fortune from a late uncle but denying responsibility for his debts.

If we can limit the "scapegoating" of blacks and the denial of their ability, what is needed to improve education will become less of a mystery. Good public schools can be produced by adequate tax bases and staff trained to create effective organizations that support the development of children and promote learning. Under improved educational conditions, more black students can be prepared to become adequate workers, family members, and citizens. However, to expect the schools to do this alone is indeed "waiting for a miracle."

Source: Comer, J. (1998). No need to wait for a miracle. *Focus, 26*(4), 3-4.



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## Asian and Pacific Islander

Washington's Asian and Pacific Islander community is made up of 25 to 30 distinct ethnic groups, each with its own culture and issues and together speaking more than 100 languages and dialects. Seventy percent of Washington's Asian and Pacific Islander (API) population is either an immigrant directly from the Pacific Rim Asian countries or is a secondary migrant from other states (Asian/Pacific Islander Think Tank, 1998).

Asian immigration before 1965 came primarily from Hawaii, China, Japan, Korea, and the Philippine Islands. In the 19th century, Asian immigrants filled the labor needs of growing industries on the West Coast, including railroad construction, mining, farming, lumber, and canning. In 1882 the Chinese became the first group in U.S. history to be legally barred from becoming citizens because of their race through the Anti-Chinese Exclusion Act, which set the stage for other exclusionary policies. The Japanese government was strong enough to be able to compromise with the United States through the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907-08, which halted the emigration of laborers to the United States, but continued to allow wives, children, and parents of Japanese to emigrate. In 1917 the Asiatic Barred Zone prohibited immigrants from a region that stretched from Japan to India, and the 1924 Immigration Act prohibited the immigration of all Asians. Because the Philippine Islands were a U.S. territory, Filipinos were U.S. nationals who could freely migrate between U.S. territories, unaffected by the Immigration Act until the Philippines were made a commonwealth in 1934, which enabled the U.S. government to place a quota on Philippine immigration of 50 per year.

Immigration laws had profound impacts on the demographic structure of Asian American communities. Early immigrants from China and the Philippines were predominantly single males, the majority of whom remained unmarried due to antimiscegenation and Chinese exclusion laws. The lack of a family life caused these unattached immigrants to depend on one another, and built solidarity among people of the same ethnic group. The short period of time over which Japanese women were allowed to join men already in the United States led to the majority of families marrying and having children at roughly the same time. These uniform age cohorts have formed distinct generations that have continued through today.

The denial of their naturalization rights led to political weakness in Asian immigrant communities. Asians in the United States were often physically assaulted, their homes burned or bombed, and they were driven out of their jobs and communities by exclusionists. Asian Americans built support networks by forming community organizations. Chinese groups were generally organized as family associations or district associations composed of members who came from the same districts in China, and provided protection, shelter, employment assistance, and loans to members. Japanese groups also organized based on members who were from the same prefuncture in Japan; they fought discriminatory and restrictive laws passed against the Japanese, supported state and U.S. Supreme Court cases that impacted Japanese people, promoted better relations between Japanese and White communities, and supported Japanese language schools, baseball leagues, entertainment, and cultural performances. Filipinos supported each other by forming extended families wherein single Filipino men were adopted as

"uncles" into existing families presided over by Filipino women who functioned as surrogate mothers, sisters, and aunts to the men. Sharing food and lodging helped these families to survive the Depression. United Filipino forces were often successful in starting labor unions and fighting off exclusion efforts against owning or leasing land.

A century of racist policy of discrimination and exclusion culminated in the internment in concentration camps of Japanese residents in the United States, two-thirds of whom were U.S. citizens. Removed from their homes and businesses, these Japanese Americans were never charged with a crime, and no documented cases of sabotage have ever been attributed to them. When Congress passed legislation in 1988 to apologize and pay monetary compensation to those interned, some groups argued that no monetary compensation should be paid until Japan pays American Prisoners of War—illustrating a misunderstanding of the difference between imprisoning captured enemy soldiers and imprisoning a country's own citizens and permanent residents without charges.

The 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act gave equal quotas of 20,000 to all countries outside the Western Hemisphere and favored immigration of professional classes. Currently, there is a tremendously long waiting list for many Chinese, Filipino, Indian, and other Asian immigrants wanting to enter the United States, while quotas for many European nations are never filled.

Since the change in immigration law in 1965, there have been three major chains of Asian immigration. One chain, largely Chinese and Filipino, has come to join family members who were earlier immigrants. The second chain is largely from the professional classes, who come for job opportunities. The third chain is made up of refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and other Southeast Asian countries, who began to enter in 1975, following the Vietnam War and the rule of the Khmer Rouge. Many Southeast Asian refugees were forced to flee their native countries because they had close ties to the United States as former governmental officials or were civil and military employees of the United States during the Vietnam War. They often must deal with the traumas of war, which are exacerbated by loss of country, family, culture, language, job, status, and respect.

The broad classification used in the United States today of "Asian or Pacific Islander" combines the largely Chinese American and Japanese American communities that have been established in the United States for many generations and experienced greater opportunities for adjustment, with largely Southeast Asian communities who have arrived more recently and are dealing with greater family and social disruption. Statistics on Asian and Pacific Islanders are thus likely to be skewed and reflect the experience of larger, more established Asian communities, contributing to "model minority syndrome." The danger of model minority syndrome is that it denies adequate attention to the various communities that need assistance, resources, and programs. In the classroom, it may contribute to perceptions that a quiet Asian child understands a lesson, when in fact the child may not understand English or may be having emotional difficulties.

## Hispanic

Hispanics represent the largest ethnic minority in Washington. A rapidly growing population, especially in Eastern Washington in the last 20 years, Hispanics are now the majority in Franklin County. Many families who have moved to Washington stay in the area. Others follow the crops, going back to homes in Texas or Mexico in the winter, challenging teachers to find ways to track children's progress across schools.

The Northward Movement which brought Mexicans to the United States happened in a similar manner to, and for many of the same reasons, that pioneers in the Ohio Valley ventured Westward. Spanish conquistadors of the 16th and 17th centuries first settled a network of Spanish-speaking communities, which make up modern-day El Paso, Tucson, San Antonio, Albuquerque, Los Angeles, San Jose, San Francisco, and several other cities. Founded before English-speaking settlers were present, these cities served as stepping stones for the nation's Anglo explorers. In 1846 the United States declared war on Mexico, which ended in dispossessing Mexico of one-third of its national territory. Mexicans living in this territory then became U.S. citizens.

With newly installed railroads and Mexico's Revolution of 1910, peasants and small artisans rebelled and fled to Texan and Californian communities where Anglos needed them as laborers in cotton fields, citrus groves, and lumber camps. During the Great Depression, federal and state governments pushed nearly half a million Mexicans back to Mexico, but most citrus workers had a chance of staying because no one else would pick fruit—people believed that the spraying of orchards caused tuberculosis among the workers.

As the economy improved, these Mexicans and their descendents slowly became the core of a "vast army of roving workers forced to migrate in pursuit of a livelihood" (Gil, 1989). Mexican labor was identified as the most important factor in the success of cotton in Texas, even while workers were being exploited. Low wages impelled Mexican Americans to follow cotton and other crops into the Rocky Mountain states. Railroads and mines also employed many Mexican laborers.

From the Rocky Mountain states, Mexican Americans began to find their way to Eastern Washington. Housing was scarce, so migrants often lived in tent cities—as many still do today. In 1942, the "bracero" (guest worker) program began, which was a war-time agreement between the United States and Mexico that filled the vacuum of labor left by those gone to war or working in war-related industries. The highly popular program was extended until 1964, during which 4.6 million braceros entered the United States.

In the 1960s, Mexican Americans began moving from rural to urban areas in an attempt to gain increased purchasing power and leave behind a poverty-ridden way of life, finding jobs in the military and other government agencies. Increasing activism among Hispanic farmworkers and urban youth brought attention to the disparities and disadvantages, and led to the creation of civil rights groups such as El Centro de la Raza in Seattle. Non-Mexican Latinos also began to arrive

in large numbers in Washington, spurred by economic and political strife in their own countries, some of which was a result of the U.S. government's unsuccessful attempts to intervene and promote democratic leadership.

There are different rates of assimilation operating in each immigrant family. Adults may remember the low wages, lack of jobs, political instability, or other reasons why they migrated and hold a strong but cautious hope for a better life in the United States. Second and third generations may be more militant on behalf of change and civil rights in the United States. Immigrants often are concerned that their children will lose their Hispanic identity, which is compounded if American-born children lose their Spanish-speaking ability. Conflict can also arise from cultural differences, such as when the value placed on the expression of social deference and respect by children toward adults or between adults is undermined by the egalitarianism in American society.

### Native American

Native Americans impacted the development of the United States in countless ways. Their political concept of federalism shaped the U.S. Constitution, their agricultural practices and medicines aided in the survival of early European settlers, and their environmental conservation left the land rich with resources.

The "discovery" of America by Europeans had a devastating effect on the indigenous population. Historian James W. Loewen (1995) notes that within three years, diseases wiped out between 90 percent and 96 percent of the American Indians of coastal New England. The decimation of entire tribes by disease continued westward and left American Indians politically weak and outnumbered, subject to war and assimilation.

In recent years, after many Native cultures and languages were lost due to a long history of colonization, armed struggle, and forced assimilation, many Native peoples have been actively seeking ways to preserve and revitalize their cultural heritage and establish their distinctness from the dominant American cultural orientation (Van Hamme, 1996). The 1989 passage of Public Law 101-477 legitimized Native American cultures and languages and supported the rights of the people to practice, promote, use, and develop their languages.

In addition, tribes are increasingly asserting their unique rights to govern themselves. Yet, the nature of tribal sovereignty is ill-understood, leading to proposals such as the Washington Republican Party resolution seeking "to terminate all such non-republican forms of government on Indian reservations." No other nation has such a relationship with its aboriginal tribes, where they are semi-independent tribal nations, with their own laws, territory, and culture.

These unique rights are based on treaties or other agreements between the United States and the tribes. Treaties were first used with tribes to obtain land, peace, and allies in the Revolutionary War. When the federal government began to push tribes into reservations or force them to assimilate, tribal leaders agreed to give up millions of acres of land in exchange for specific

rights, especially fishing and hunting rights and access to religious sites. By agreeing to give up land in treaties, tribal leaders made sure they kept the right to govern themselves, take care of their land, and decide as a community what is important, stated Theresa Rapida, Associate Professor of Public Administration at Portland State University (Thompson, 2000).

In addition to fishing and hunting rights, through the trust responsibility and treaty obligations the federal government has the permanent obligation to financially support Native American education at the level required by the tribe. In the 1800s, this education was provided with the goal to assimilate Native Americans, that is, "to take the 'Indian' out of the Indian" (Reyhner & Eder, 1992). Native children were sent away to boarding schools, where their traditional languages and religions were banned. In a display at the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribal Center, Ceara Jones of the Suquamish Tribal Oral History Project describes her experience: "We stayed there for three years. We were just kids, you know. They (our parents) said we had to go or else they would go to jail. That's what they used to tell us. And we would cry, 'We don't want to go back, we don't want to leave home.' They would tell us, 'You will go or else we go to jail.' There were some around two, three, four, five years old. They had these long rooms for our girls and there were sometimes five to 50 kids in one room."

Native Americans are still feeling the effects of being raised in the environment of these boarding schools. John McCoy, Director of Governmental Affairs at the Tulalip Tribes, asserts: "So then they come back to the reservation and they're expected to function, and they have kids. One of the things you don't learn in boarding school is parenting skills or family unit skills. Those are lost."

Other methods of attempting to assimilate Native Americans were through the General Allotment Act, which allowed non-natives to purchase and settle tribal lands, further breaking up tribal life. In the 1950s, Congress moved to terminate its relationship with more than 100 tribes and paid Native Americans to dissolve their tribal units. They also attempted to relocate Native Americans into large White urban cities, where it was hoped they would lose their culture and language since they would be removed from the source.

Against the backdrop of the increased activism of the American Indian Movement, the government began to move to strengthen tribal governments. Tribes have been tapping into the modern legal system since the 1970s, making great strides toward having their rights recognized and respected. "A lot of the conflicts over zoning, over gaming, over fishing, they are conflicts because tribes had these rights, but they never attempted to assert or exercise them," explains Alan Parker, Director of the Northwest Indian Applied Research Institute at Evergreen State College and a Chippewa Cree (Thompson, 2000). Terminated tribes are seeking, and some have won, recognition from Congress. In addition, Native American communities are increasingly utilizing the parent advisory committees required by federal Native American education funding programs to advocate for changes in the way their children are educated.

# Appendix D

## Resources

### Multicultural Literature for Children—Publishers, Distributors, Recommendation Lists

Barahona Center for the Study of Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents
California State University San Marcos
San Marcos, CA 92096-0001
(760) 750-4070
http://www.csusm.edu/csbs/english/center.htm

Bilingual Educational Services, Inc.
2514 S. Grand Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90007-9979
(800) 448-6032
http://www.besbooks.com

CRC Publishing Company-EagleRock Books
PO Box 22583
Kansas City, MO 64113-2583
(800) 268-2059
http://www.crcpub.com

MOTHEREAD, Inc.
Building 3 Suite 246
4208 Six Forks Rd.
Raleigh, NC 27609
(919) 781-2088

Multicultural Publishers Exchange
Box 9869
Madison, WI 53715
(800) 558-2110

Multicultural Publishing and Education Catalog
http://www.mpec.org

Oyate
2702 Mathews St.
Berkeley, CA 94702
(510) 848-6700
http://www.oyate.org

Pinata Books
University of Houston
Houston, TX 77204-2174
(800) 633-ARTE
http://www.arte.uh.edu/Pinata_Books/pinata_books.html

Resource Center of the Americas
3019 Minnehaha Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55406-1931
(800) 452-8382
http://www.americas.org

Teaching for Change
Network of Educators on the Americas
PO Box 73038
Washington, DC 20056
(800) 763-9131
http://www.teachingforchange.org

The Tickle Tree
Early Childhood Books and Resources
544 SE 69th Ave.
Portland, OR 97215-2112
(503) 408-9479

## Multicultural Education Curricula and Resources

The African American Journey
PBS
http://www.pbs.org/aajourney/index.html

All Together Now!
Leadership Conference Education Fund
1629 K Street, NW, Suite 1010
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 466-3434
http://www.civilrights.org/diversity_works/education/alltogethernow/index.html

Association for Childhood Education International
17904 Georgia Ave., Ste. 215
Olney, MD 20832
(800) 423-3563
http://www.udel.edu/bateman/acei

The CRAB (Culturally Relevant/Anti-Bias) Network
65 S. Grand Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91103
(626) 397-1306
email: rldsparks@aol.com

Ethnic Heritage Council
305 Harrison Street, Suite 326
Seattle, WA 98109
(206) 443-1410
http://www.cultural.org/ehc/index.html

Hate and Violence: No Simple Answers
Discovery Channel
http://www.discovery.com/stories/history/hateviolence/hateviolence2.html

Harvard Education Publishing Group
Gutman Library 349
6 Appian Way
Cambridge, MA 02138
(800) 513-0763
http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hepg

Martin Luther King, Jr.
Seattle Times
http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/mlk/index.html

New Horizons for Learning
PO Box 15329
Seattle, WA 98115
(206) 547-7936
http://www.newhorizons.org/multicultural.html

Proposed Standards for Culturally-Responsive Schools in Washington State
By the Washington State Native American Education Advisory Committee and Native American Think Tank
http://unity.ospi.wednet.edu/*COUP/IndianPlan98.html

Racial Issues and Identities: A Guide to Resources on the Web
New York Times
http://www.nytimes.com/library/national/race/web-guide.html

Rethinking Schools
1001 E. Keefe Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53212
(414) 964-9646
http://www.rethinkingschools.org

Teaching Tolerance
Southern Poverty Law Center
PO Box 548
Montgomery, AL 36177-9621
http://www.splcenter.org/teachingtolerance/tt-index.html

Unity Project
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Old Capitol Building
PO Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200
(360) 664-3313
http://unity.ospi.wednet.edu

## About Multicultural Education—Books for Educators


Ayers, W., Klonsky, M., & Lyon. G. (Eds.) (2000). *A simple justice: The challenge of small schools* (Teaching for Social Justice Series). New York: Teachers College Press.

Ballenger, C. (1998). *Teaching other people's children: Literacy and learning in a bilingual classroom* (Practioner Inquiry Series). New York: Teachers College Press.

Brown McCracken, Janet. (1993). *Valuing Diversity: The Primary Years.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom.* New York: New Press.

Derman-Sparks, Louise, and the ABC Task Force. (1989). *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Dilg, M. (1999). *Race and culture in the classroom: Teaching and learning through multicultural education* (Multicultural Education Series). New York: Teachers College Press.

Foster, M., & Delpit, L. (1998). *Black teachers on teaching* (New Press Education Series). New York: New Press.

Howard, G.R. (1999). *We can't teach what we don't know: White teachers, multiracial schools* (Multicultural Education Series). New York: Teachers College Press.

Kendall, Frances E. (1996). *Diversity in the classroom: New approaches to the education of young children.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1997). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African-American children.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Loewen, J. (1995). *Lies my teacher told me: Everything your American history textbook got wrong.* Simon and Schuster.

Nieto, S. (1999). *The light in their eyes: Creating multicultural learning communities* (Multicultural Education Series). New York: Teachers College Press.

Reyes, P., Scribner, J.D., & Scribner, A.P. (1999). *Lessons from high-performing Hispanic schools: Creating learning communities* (Critical Issues in Educational Leadership Series). New York: Teachers College Press.


## Original Literature by People of Different Cultures

### African American authors

Lucille Clifton
Blessing the boats: New and selected poems 1988-2000

Yusef Komunyakaa
Talking dirty to the Gods

Ai
Vice: New and selected poems

Toni Cade Bambara
Gorilla, my love

Paule Marshall
Brown girl, brownstones

Jamaica Kincaid
Lucy

Ann Lane Petry
The street

Louise Meriwether, Nellie Y. McKay
Daddy was a number runner

Gloria Naylor
Mama Day

Ishmael Reed
Yellow back radio broke-down

Walter Mosley
RL's dream

Charles R. Johnson
Middle passage
Dreamer

Maya Angelou
I know why the caged bird sings

Toni Morrison
The bluest eye
Beloved

Alice Walker
The color purple

Gayl Jones
Corregidora (Black Women Writers Series)
The Healing (Bluestreak Series)

Rita Dove
Thomas and Beulah

Ralph Waldo Ellison
Invisible man

James A. Baldwin
James Baldwin: Collected essays: Notes of a native son / Nobody knows my name / The fire next time / No name in the street / The devil finds work / Other essays (Library of America). Edited by Toni Morrison
Go tell it on the mountain

## Asian American authors

Maxine Hong Kingston
The Woman warrior: Memoirs of a girlhood among ghosts

Gish Jen
Typical American

Jessica Hagedorn
Dogeaters

Frank Chin
Donald Duk: A novel

Gus Lee
China boy: A novel

Amy Tan
The kitchen God's wife

Cynthia Kadohata
The floating world

Monica Itoi Sone
Nisei daughter

Yoshiko Uchida
Picture bride: A novel

Fae Myenne Ng
Bone

Shawn Wong
American knees

Patricia Chao
Monkey king

Mei Ng
Eating Chinese food naked: A novel

Lan Samantha Chang
Hunger: A novella and stories

Wayson Choy
The jade peony: A novel

Joy Kogawa
Obasan

Garrett K. Hongo
The river of heaven
Volcano: A memoir of Hawai'I

Elaine H. Kim, Eui-Young Yu, Anna Deavere Smith
East to America: Korean American life stories

Hisaye Yamamoto
Seventeen syllables and other stories

## Latino American authors

Sandra Cisneros
The house on Mango Street

Jimmy Santiago Baca
Set this book on fire!
Black Mesa poems

Martin Espada
A Mayan astronomer in Hell's Kitchen: Poems

Dagoberto Gilb
The magic of blood
The last known residence of Mickey Acuna

Ernesto Quinonez
Bodega dreams

Oscar Hijuelos
The Mambo Kings play songs of love: A novel

Francisco Jimenez
The circuit: Stories from the life of a migrant child

Ana Castillo
So far from God: A novel

Victor E. Villasenor
Rain of gold

Alfredo Vea Jr.
La maravilla
Jose Antonio Villarreal
Poco

Julia Alvarez
In the time of the butterflies
How the Garcia girls lost their accents

Cristina Garcia
Dreaming in Cuban: A novel

Alicia Gaspar De Alba
Sor Juana's second dream: A novel

Esmeralda Santiago
When I was Puerto Rican
Almost a woman

Rudolfo A. Anaya
Bless me, Ultima

Victor Martinez
Parrot in the oven: Mi vida: A novel

## Native American authors

Sherman Alexie
The toughest Indian in the world
The Lone Ranger & Tonto fistfight in heaven
The business of fancy dancing

Gerald Robert Vizenor
Griever: An American monkey king in China

Joy Harjo
A map to the next world: Poems

Simon J. Ortiz
Men on the moon: Collected short stories (Sun Tracks, V. 37)
After and before the lightning (Sun Tracks, V. 28)
From Sand Creek: Rising in this heart which is our America (Sun Tracks, V. 42)

Paula Gunn Allen
The woman who owned the shadows

N. Scott Momaday
House made of dawn

Adrian C. Louis
Ceremonies of the damned: Poems (Western Literature Series)

Linda Hogan
Power: A novel
Mean spirit
The book of medicines: Poems

Louis Owens
The sharpest sight: A novel (American Indian Literature and Critical Studies, V. 1)
Dark River (American Indian Literature and Critical Studies Series, V. 30)
Bone game: A novel (American Indian Literature and Critical Studies Series, V. 10)

Louise Erdrich
Love medicine
The beet queen
Tracks: A novel

Elizabeth Woody
Luminaries of the humble (Sun Tracks, V. 30)
Seven hands seven hearts

Luci Tapahonso
Blue Horses Rush in: Poems and Stories (Sun Tracks, V. 34)
Saanii dahataal: The women are singing: Poems and stories (Sun Tracks, V. 23)

Diane Glancy

The relief of America
Flutie: A novel

Chrystos

Fugitive colors
Dream on
Not vanishing

Michael Dorris

A yellow raft in blue water

nila northSun

A snake in her mouth: Poems 1974-96

Leslie Marmon Silko

Ceremony (Contemporary American Fiction Series)
Storyteller

Janet Campbell Hale

The jailing of Cecelia Capture